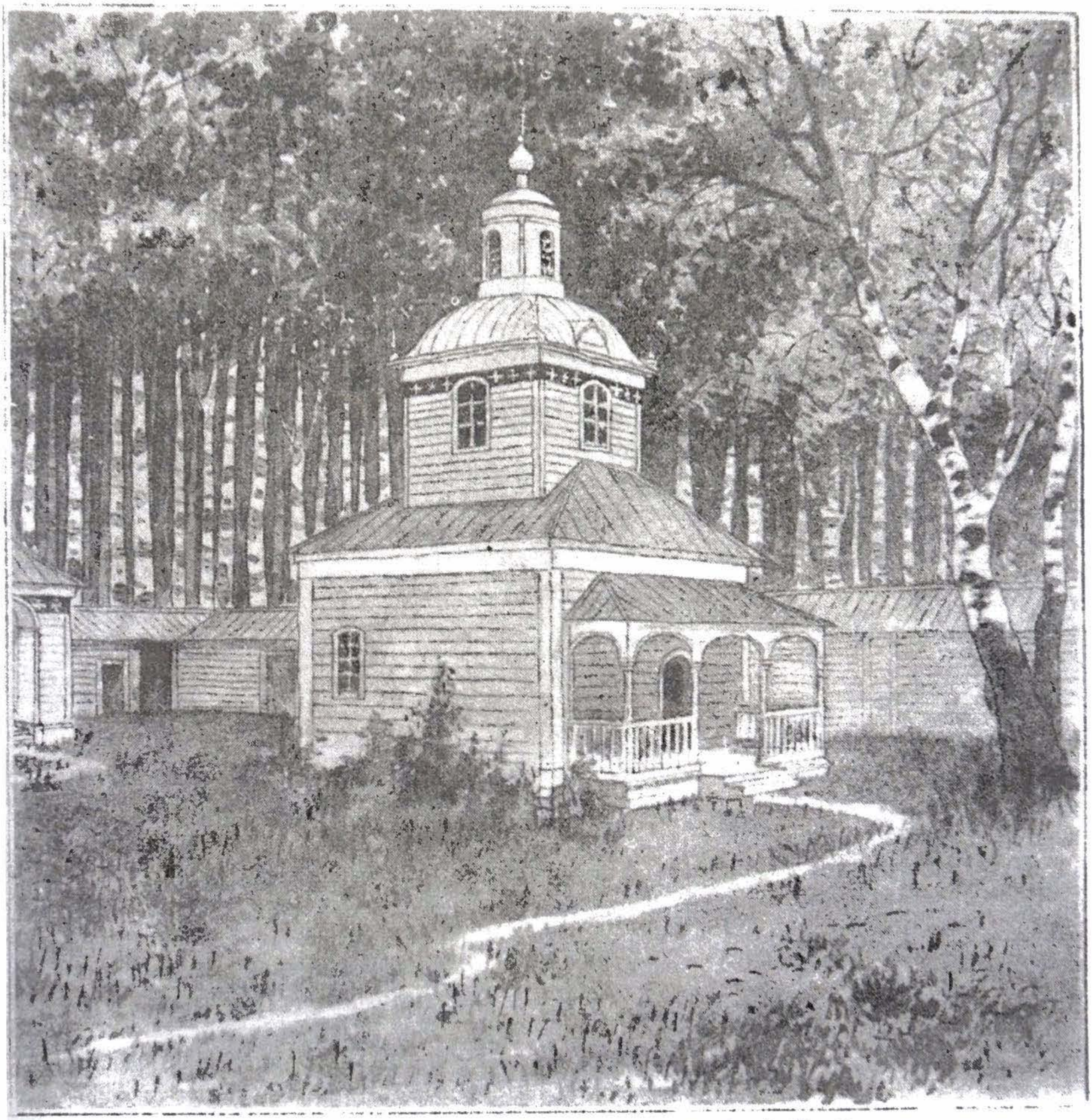
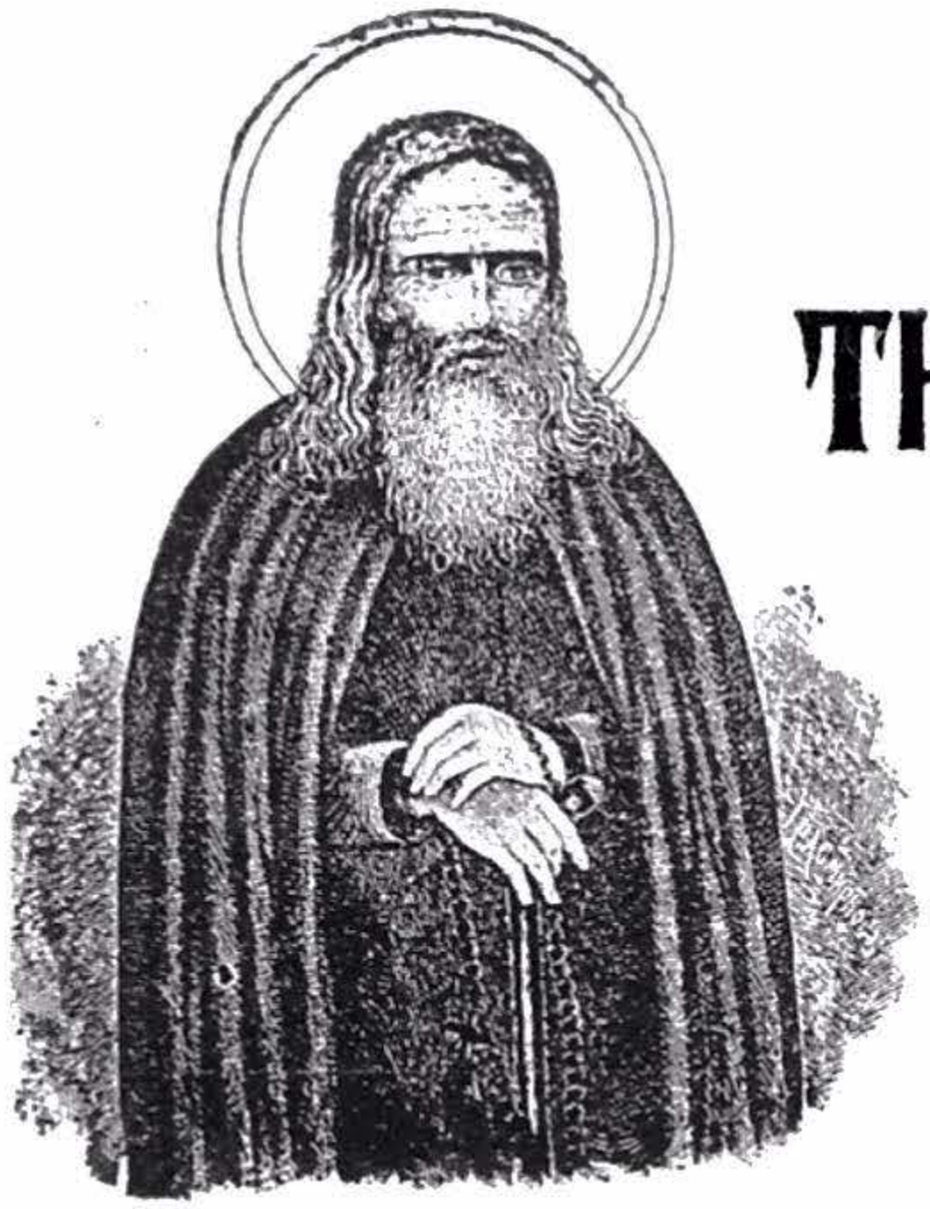
THE ORTHODOX WORD

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1972 NINETY CENTS



ST. NILUS OF SORA AND HIS SKETE TRADITION



THE ORTHODOX WORD

A Bimonthly Periodical

OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John* (*Maximovitch*), Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076

1972, Vol. 8, no. 5 (46)
September - October

CONTENTS

195 Saint Herman, Zealot of Orthodoxy
196 The Life of St. Nilus of Sora, and His Skete Tradition
212 A Treasury of Saint Herman's Spirituality (XIII-XV)
219 The Zealots of Mount Athos: Leaven of True Orthodoxy Today
229 The Miracles of Archbishop John Maximovitch (III)
230 Martyrology of the Communist Yoke: Fathers Ismael and Michael Rozhdestvensky, the Catacomb Brother-Priests
235 Orthodox Bibliography

COVER: Gethsemene Chapel in the St. Nilus of Sora Skete of the Dormition, as it appeared in 1898. This and the illustrations on pages 198, 207, and 208 are from *Istoricheski Vestnik* for 1898.

Copyright 1972 by The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood.

Published bimonthly by The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood.
Second-class postage paid at Platina, California.
Yearly subscription $5, two years $9, three years $12.
All inquiries should be directed to:
THE ORTHODOX WORD, PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076
Office of Publication: Beegum Gorge Road, Platina, California

Saint Herman
Zealot of Orthodoxy

Those who have left the true Orthodox Church are not on the right path.
St. Herman of Alaska

EVERY ORTHODOX SAINT is a zealot of God, and in the Service to him St. Herman is called "zealot of faith," "new zealot of the desert-dwellers of old," "zealot of God's glory." In our own day one particular kind of zeal has become of exceptional importance in the face of the "ecumenical" assault against Orthodoxy: zeal for God's Truth, for Orthodoxy itself.

It is therefore of great significance that there have just become available two hitherto unknown accounts of visits with St. Herman by the Governor of Russian Alaska, Ferdinand von Wrangell, and his wife Elizabeth. In one of these accounts the Protestant Governor, in order to answer St. Herman's bold question, "Do you know what the truth is and where you can find it?" finds it necessary to "emphasize our Lutheran Faith" and gives a vague "ecumenical" answer — only to hear St. Herman's even bolder retort: "*No, no! Those who have left the true Orthodox Church are not on the right path.*"

With this and the accompanying description by the Governor's wife of St. Herman's "castle" (see page 213), the veil of a century and a half seems to be drawn aside, and we see a vivid glimpse of St. Herman as he appeared to his contemporaries — as truly a zealot of God and His Holy Orthodoxy.

THE LIFE OF

Saint Nilus of Sora

AND HIS SKETE TRADITION

St. Nilus, with his example of almost impossibly simple and severe monastic life, has not been surrounded with the historical glory of some of the other great founders of monasteries in Russia, and his Life was lost very early. Nonetheless, the main outlines of his life are known, and they are here presented as translated from the Patericon of St. Sergius' Holy Trinity Monastery, published by the Monastery in 1896. *Other material has been added, as indicated in the footnotes. The troparion on the opposite page is the earliest known of the several composed in his honor and dates at least to the* 17*th century.*

SAINT NILUS was for Russian monasticism an instructor and writer such as Sts. Isaac the Syrian, Abba Dorotheus, Barsanuphius the Great, John of the Ladder, Nilus of Sinai, and other Holy Fathers were for Orthodox monasticism in general. He came from the noble* family of Maikov, was born in 1433, and made the beginning of his monastic life in the monastery of St. Cyril of White Lake,** where he lived under the instruction of the strict elder Paisius Yaroslavov, who was later abbot of St. Sergius' Holy Trinity Monastery and refused the office of Metropolitan. However, the life of the White Lake Monastery had greatly declined since the repose of its holy founder, as St. Nilus indicates in a letter which has come down to us: "Was not my departure from the (White Lake) monastery for the sake of spiritual profit? Yes, for its sake; for I did not see there the preservation of the way of life according to God's law and the traditions of the Fathers, but rather a life according to one's own will and human ideas; and many there were who, acting in such a corrupt way, imagined that they were living a virtuous life."

And so, in search of the true sources of Orthodox monastic life, St. Nilus went to the holy places of the East. Taking with him his disciple and

* The attempt of some scholars to disprove the generally accepted view of St. Nilus' noble origins is based on a single line from one of the Saint's epistles: "Of myself I dare do nothing, as I am an ignoramus and *peasant*..." But in all probability the Saint here is not speaking literally, but rather is using a humble figure of speech. It is surely significant that all three of the Saint's disciples who are known to us were of the nobility.

** †1429, June 9. For his Life, see *The Orthodox Word*, 1972, no. 3.

SAINT NILUS OF SORA

Commemorated April 7 and May 7

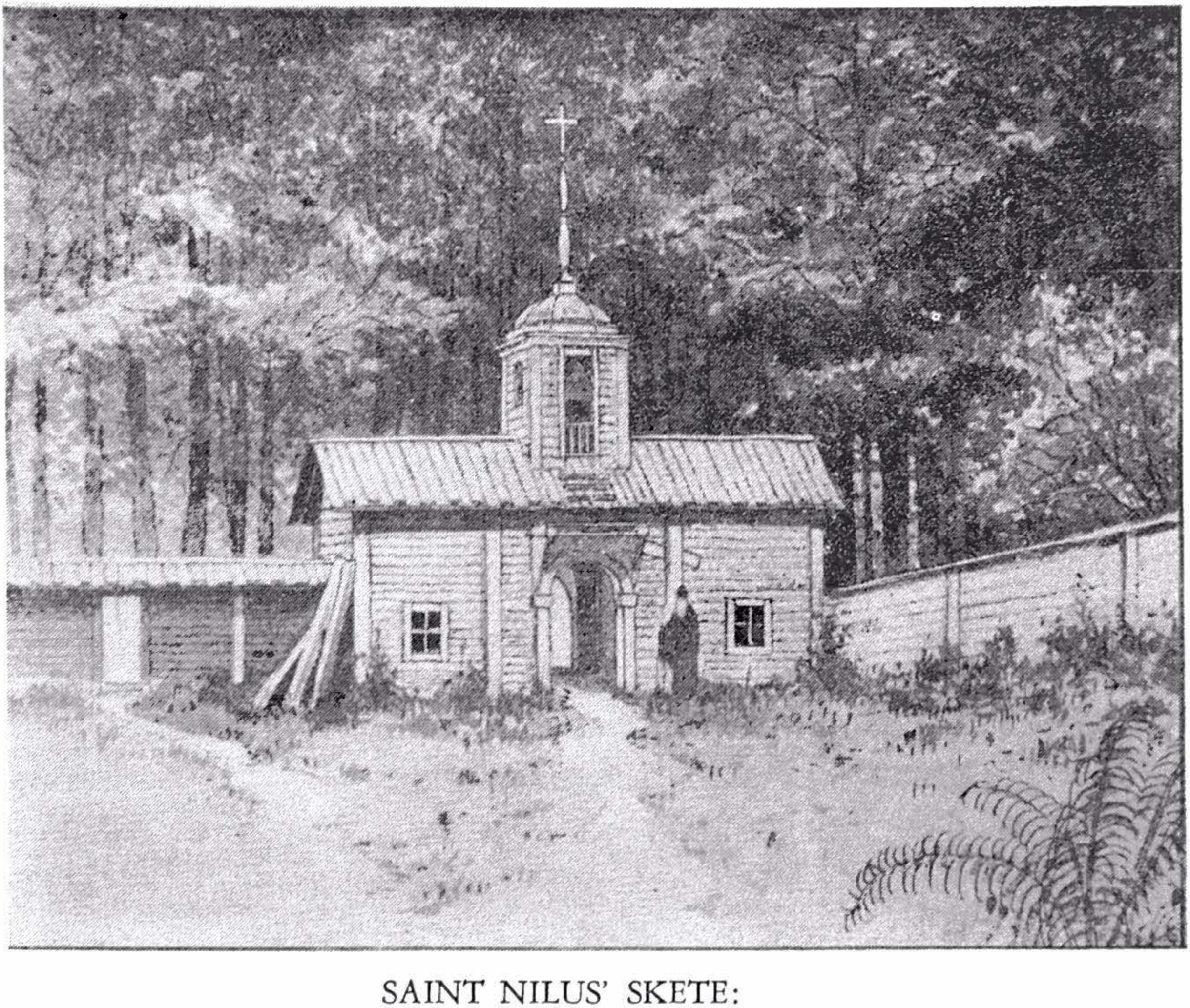
Troparion, Tone 1

FLEEING the world as David* and regarding everything in it as dirt,* thou didst settle in a place of silence,* being filled with spiritual joy, O our Father Nilus,* and didst will to serve the One God in solitude.* Thou didst blossom as the palm tree and as the fruit-bearing vine,* multiplying thy children in the wilderness.* Wherefore in thanksgiving we cry out:*

Glory be to Him Who chose thee as a praiseworthy rule for anchorites in Russia,* glory be to Him Who strengthened thee in the wilderness,* glory be to Him Who saveth us by thy prayers.

On the road from
St. Cyril's Monastery
to St. Nilus' Skete:

Pilgrims stop to rest
by the Cross which
marks the beginning
of the side-road to
St. Nilus' Skete



SAINT NILUS' SKETE:

The entrance-tower of the Skete of the Forerunner, seen from inside

fellow-laborer, St. Innocent of Komel,* who was of the noble family of Okhlebinin, he spent several years on Mt. Athos, where there was the Russian monastery of Xylurgou (near the present Skete of the Prophet Elias), and in the monasteries of Constantinople. Here St. Nilus studied all forms of monastic asceticism, and in particular the form of *skete-life,* which he had not known up to then. Most importantly, he strove everywhere to enter into the meaning and spirit of the so-called *mental monastic work,* the inward self-trial and practice of the Jesus Prayer, applying everything to his own spiritual life. He attentively studied and applied in experience the teachings of the Divinely-wise Holy Fathers; Sts. Anthony the Great, Ephraim and Isaac of Syria, Barsanuphius, John of the Ladder, Abba Dorotheus, Maximus the Confessor, Hesychius, Simeon the New Theologian, Peter Damascene, and Gregory, Nilus, and Philotheus of Sinai.

On Mt. Athos the intention was born in him to start, on returning to his homeland, the new (to Russia) skete form of life according to the example of the Eastern monks. Before him there had been two forms of monasticism in Russia; the cœnobitic and the hermitic. St. Nilus made the beginning of the third form: the middle path of asceticism, where a few monks would settle such a distance apart that they could still hear each other's voices but labored each by himself.

Returning to White Lake Monastery, St. Nilus did not remain to live in it, but built himself a cell out of logs not far from it. Later he went some ten miles away, to the river Sorka or Sora. The place which St. Nilus chose for his Skete was wild, dark, desolate. The river Sora barely flows through this marshy, low-lying region, and it resembles more a swamp than a river. There is forest all around. Here, having erected a cross, St. Nilus built at first a chapel and a solitary cell and dug a well; and when several brothers had gathered together to live with him he built a wooden church in honor of the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2). Later another wooden church dedicated to St. John the Forerunner was added. Nearby he built a mill.

From this Skete St. Nilus wrote to his friend St. Innocent: "When we were living together with you in the monastery (of St. Cyril), you know how I avoided worldly ties and strove to live according to the Holy Scripture, even though in my slothfulness I did not succeed in this. At the end of my wandering I came again to the monastery, built a cell near it, and lived as best I could. Now I have resettled far from the monastery and have found by God's grace a place according with my ideas, a place little accessible to worldly people, as you yourself have seen. Living in solitude, I occupy myself with searching the spiritual writings: above all I search the Lord's commandments and

* †1521, March 19.

their commentaries, and the Apostolic traditions; then the Lives and instructions of the Holy Fathers. I reflect on all this, and whatever I find after reflection to be God-pleasing and useful for my soul, I copy out for myself. In this is my life and breath. As for my infirmity and sloth, I place my hope in God and the Most Pure Mother of God. If there is something for me to undertake, and if I find nothing about it in Scripture, I lay it aside for a time until I do find something. I do not presume to undertake anything at all on my own will and according to my own judgment. Whether you live as a hermit or in cœnobitic life, pay heed to the Holy Scripture and follow in the footsteps of the Fathers, or be in subjection to one who is known to you as a spiritual man in word, life, and judgment. The Holy Scripture is harsh only for one who does not wish to humble himself by fear of God and depart from earthly ways of thinking, but rather desires to live according to his own passionate will. Others do not wish humbly to search the Holy Scripture, do not wish even to hear of how one should live, as if the Scripture were not written for us or need not be put into practice in our time. But for true ascetic strugglers in the present time and in all times, the words of the Lord will always be words as pure as refined silver; the Lord's commandments for them are dearer than gold and precious stones, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

Both for himself and for his disciples, St. Nilus established the strict rules of skete-life. For the building of the first church of his Skete, a raised place had to be made by filling in the marshy ground, all the more because the monastery's sepulchre was to be under the church. By the hands of the Divinely-wise Elder and the skete-dwellers who lived with him, a high mound was made for the church and sepulchre. Cells were placed on this mound, each a stone's throw from the others and from the church. The skete-dwellers gathered in their church, following the example of the Eastern Fathers, only on Saturdays, Sundays, and feast days; on other days each prayed and labored in his own cell. The All-night Vigil of the Skete continued literally the whole night; after each kathisma of the Psalter there were three or four readings from the Holy Fathers. At the Liturgy only the Trisagion, Alleluia, Cherubic Hymn, and Meet It Is were sung; everything else was chanted, slowly. On Saturdays the monks went to the monastery sepulchre, where a panikhida was served for the repose of the departed.

In his Rule to his disciples, St. Nilus thus depicts the outward side of skete-life: "(1) (The monks) should earn their livelihood by the labor of their own hands, but should not occupy themselves with agriculture, since because of its complexity it is not suited to hermits. (2) They should accept alms only in case of illness or extreme need, but not any alms that might serve to give offense to anyone. (3) They should not leave the Skete. (4) In church

there should be no adornments made of silver, even for the sacred vessels, but everything should be simple. (5) The young and healthy should wear out the body with fasting, thirst, and labor, while to the old and weak a relaxation is permitted to a certain extent. (6) No women at all are to enter the Skete."

These rules for outward life are not complex. The labor and asceticism of skete-life consist primarily of inward ascetic labor, a strict observation of the conditions of the soul, the purification of the soul by prayer and thought of God. This form of asceticism St. Nilus depicts in some detail in his Rule for his disciples, an extensive work which is called "The Tradition from the Holy Fathers on How to Live," or the "Rule of Skete-life." The characteristic that distinguishes this "Tradition" or Rule of St. Nilus of Sora from all other Rules written by the founders of monasteries is precisely that St. Nilus concentrates all attention on *inward* spiritual life in Christ, on the purely spiritual training of the Orthodox Christian.

THE GLORY OF ST. NILUS shone out far beyond the walls of Russian monasteries. He was known and revered by Russian hierarchs. When the heresy of the Judaizers broke out in Novgorod and the expectation spread everywhere that the world would end in 1492 (the year 7000 from the creation of the world), St. Gennadius, Archbishop of Novgorod,*** asked Ioasaph, Archbishop of Rostov, to take counsel from St. Nilus (as well as from Paisius Yaroslavov) concerning his idea of these expectations. In 1490 a council was convoked against the heresy of the Judaizers, and the Elders Paisius and Nilus were invited to Moscow to the council. There was another council in Moscow in 1503, and St. Nilus was present at this council also. It is worthy of note that it was St. Nilus who introduced into this council's discussions the proposal that monasteries should be relieved of the governance of patrimonial estates, i.e., the owning of villages. This question raised heated discussions. St. Joseph, Abbot of Volokolamsk,* an eminent church figure of the time, defended monastery possessions. But the Blessed Nilus, proposing that monasteries should not own villages, demanded that "monks should live in the wilderness and earn their livelihood by handiwork." Many monks of St. Cyril's White Lake Monastery,** and even some monks of other monasteries, joined themselves to St. Nilus' opinion. However, this opinion was not upheld at the council. After the death of St. Nilus, his idea lived on for a long time in the minds of his disciples. One of them, Prince Bassian Kosoi, fought strongly

*** †1505, Dec. 4.

* †1515, Sept. 9.

** St. Cyril himself, a hundred years earlier, had refused to accept villages for his monastery, as related in his life (*Orthodox Word,* 1972, no. 3, p. 138).

for the position that monasteries should have no villages, and with him there were other elders, and also monks from the Holy Mountain, including St. Maximus the Greek.***

But most important in the life of St. Nilus is that to his very death he remained faithful to his Rule, embodying its principles not only in questions concerning society, such as the question of monastery possessions, but also in his own life and ascetic labors.

Quite some time before his death, St. Nilus, sending his disciple St. Innocent to establish a cœnobitic monastery, prophesied that this monastery would flourish, and referring to his own wilderness Skete he said: "But here, as it was during my lifetime, so let it remain after my death; let the brethren live alone, each in his own cell." These words were preserved as a testament and were observed after the death of St. Nilus. The great Elder departed to the Lord on May 7, 1508, on the third Sunday of Pascha, being 75 years old.

When he was dying, St. Nilus left the following testament to his disciples: "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I give as my testament concerning myself to you, my constant lords and brethren who are of my way of life; I beg you, throw my body into the wilderness, that the beasts and birds may devour it, inasmuch as it has sinned much against God and is unworthy of burial. But if you do not do this, then, having dug a hole in the place where we live, bury me with all dishonor. And fear the words which the Great Arsenius gave as his testament to his disciples, saying: I will stand in judgment with you if you give my body to anyone. For it was my concern, in so far as it lay in my power, that I should not be deemed worthy of any honor or glory of this world; as it was in this life, so let it be after my death. And I beg all to pray for my sinful soul, and I beg forgiveness of everyone. and may there be forgiveness also from me: may God forgive us all."

On the part of St. Nilus. this testament serves as an expression of his profound humility before God and men, which is worthy of being expressed in the words of the Prophet David: *I have been humbled, O Lord, exceedingly* (Ps. 118:107).

This desire expressed before his death by the great zealot of poverty and humility was fulfilled: his monastery remained one of the poorest and least populated in the north of Russia; and his holy relics reposed. until late in the 19th century, under a humble wooden church. Once, in 1569, Tsar John the Terrible, having visited and prayed at St. Cyril's monastery, came to St. Nilus' Skete and, having had a moleben served and having praised God and the life of His wonderworker. commanded that a stone church be erected. But at that time St. Nilus himself appeared to him and commanded him not to

*** †1556, Jan. 21.

build a stone church, and forbade any kind of adornments to be made either in the churches or in the cells, but commanded that there should be only what was needful. After this apparition the Tsar gave a certificate of bestowal to the Skete with his own signature, giving an allowance of grain and money for the upkeep of the brethren.

The Holy Church, in course of time, by indication from above, joined Nilus to the number of the Holy Fathers and established that his commemoration be kept in the Church Calendar on May 7, the day of his blessed repose.

THERE IS a remarkable tradition concerning the sacred iconographic face of the Saint which is painted on the cover of his tomb. A certain wealthy man of the Moscow territory was captured by Tatars and remained in captivity to them for many years. He greatly sorrowed over his family and called on the saints of God to help him. Once at night there appeared to him in a light sleep a resplendent elder who ordered him to paint the icon of St. Nilus, promising to return him to his homeland. Awakening from sleep, he wanted to ask how this could be done; but the elder vanished like lightning from his sight, which was blinded by the bright light. The prisoner began to reflect to himself: Who is this St. Nilus, of whom he had now heard for the first time, and where is he to be found? He began to call on him for help, even though he did not know him. And behold, the next night the same elder appeared to him again and said: "The Nilus who is near White Lake, ten miles from St. Cyril's monastery." Jumping up from his bed, the prisoner wanted to look more closely at the elder's face and question him in more detail, but again, just as quickly as before, he became invisible, leaving behind a ray of light and a fragrance. Then he believed that indeed the Lord had sent this Saint to him, and he prayed St. Nilus that he would reveal his face more clearly to him; and on the third night the Saint again appeared to him and left near his head an outline of his face and spoke to him this word of consolation: "Man of God, take this leaf and go into the Russian land."

Scarcely had the consoled prisoner come to himself than he actually found by his pillow the outline of the Saint's face. With tears he begged the Lord and His Saint to show him the path by which to be delivered from the hands of the unbelievers; and again a voice came to him: "Go at night into the steppe and you will see before you a bright star; follow it and you will escape the Hagarenes." The prisoner, strengthened by faith, boldly set out at night into the immeasurable, unknown steppe, taking with him a little bread, and a wondrous star led him, according to the promise of St. Nilus, until the first rays of dawn. Then he heard behind him the trampling of horses' hoofs and the yells of barbarians seeking their prey. In terror he fell to the ground,

begging God to preserve him, and the Lord overshadowed him with invisible power from their gaze, so that with cries they passed by.

The prisoner wandered day and night over the shelterless steppe, and then he came to a deep and rapid river, although it was not wide, and there was no one to take him across, and it flowed across the whole steppe. The barbarians knew that it was impossible to cross the river, and they chased him to its banks in the firm conviction that they would catch the fugitive. Catching sight of him from afar, they strove towards him with wild yells and bared swords, and he, seeing no deliverance for himself anywhere, signed himself with the sign of the cross and threw himself into the river. The waters carried him quickly downstream, and the Hagarenes shot arrows at him from the bank in vain, for the mercy of God preserved him. The river carried him faster than their horses could run, and they returned, considering him already drowned. But the river, in a dashing of waves, threw the man out on the opposite bank, and from there he walked across the steppe without hindrance, living on plants and ceaselessly calling in his prayers on the Lord and His Saint, Nilus.

This river was probably the Donetz, which at that time served as the boundary between Russia and the Crimean Horde. The rescued prisoner successfully reached the Russian cities. Before he went to his father's house he sought out an icon-painter in Moscow and ordered him to paint the Saint's face for him from the leaf that had been given him, the size of the cover of a coffin; then he called priests and poor people and, having given them a dinner, furnished them with generous alms, telling everyone how the Lord had delivered him from captivity. And when the icon of the Saint had been painted, he made a great festivity in honor of St. Nilus and sent the honorable icon to his Skete with a faithful servant, giving many gifts and church utensils to the Skete. This icon lay on the Saint's shrine right up to this century and, by the prayers of St. Nilus, healings flow forth from it. The Saint is depicted in schema, in the splendid repose of the contemplation after death which he had begun while still on earth.

Many other miracles occurred through the intercession of St. Nilus after his repose. Here is another remarkable miracle, as recorded by the monks of St. Nilus' Skete: "Once there was living in St. Nilus' Skete a certain hieromonk Adam, and his son Michael lived with him. The hieromonk sent the boy to the sacristan for some church needs, and while he was on his way there suddenly came to him a certain strange man who seized him and carried him, as if on the wind, into an impenetrable forest, bringing him into a large room in his dwelling and placing him in the middle of this cabin, in front of the window. And that old man told the woman there to feed the boy, and they

brought him every kind of wild plant and tried to make him eat and drink. But the boy ate nothing, but only stood in the same spot where he had been placed, unmoving, weeping and lamenting bitterly. The hieromonk soon began looking for his son and looked everywhere in the Skete and in nearby places without finding him anywhere. And so he came to the Skete and gathered the brethren and went with everyone to the chapel which stands not far away in the forest, where there is the wonderworking Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God Hodigitria, and began to serve a moleben and call with tears on St. Nilus the Wonderworker to help. And at that moment St. Nilus came to the boy's aid and stood before the room where the boy was standing, and when he struck the window-frame with his staff the building was shaken and all the unclean spirits fell to the earth. The boy, standing and weeping, saw St. Nilus the Wonderworker standing under the window and saying: 'O miserable unclean spirits! Why are you attacking my Skete? Take this boy back to my Skete from which you took him and place him in the same spot.' And having said this, the Saint became invisible. And the unclean spirits began to howl among themselves at the one who had brought the boy to them: 'Woe to us who are perishing! Quickly take the boy and bring him back where you took him from!' The same strange one seized the boy and brought him to the Skete like the wind, as far as the Skete's mill, for he did not dare to bring him into the Skete; and placing him on a haystack, he became invisible. The boy began to cry out on the haystack, and at that moment the hieromonk with the brethren, coming from the moleben in the chapel, heard the boy crying out in the forest and came to the sound and saw the boy standing on the haystack; and they glorified God and His Saint, Nilus the Wonderworker, and began to question the boy. The boy told them everything that had happened to him, what he had seen and heard. And from that time this boy became very humble, as if he had been stupefied. The hieromonk out of terror left the Skete with his son. We sinful monks of the Skete saw and heard all this in detail from this boy, and we wrote down a little out of the much that we heard so that our brethren will remember, for the benefit of those who love God and glorify the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen."*

* A. S. Archangelsky, *St. Nilus of Sora,* St. Petersburg, 1882, App., pp. 8-10. If any contemporary reader regard this miracle as "fanciful," he should read the account (which was seen and approved by Starets Ambrose of Optina) of an even stranger demonic "kidnapping" in 19th-century Russia, where a young man, after his mother cursed him, became the slave of a demon-"grandfather" for twelve years. (See S. Nilus, *The Power of God and Man's Weakness,* St. Sergius' Lavra, 1908, pp. 279-298.)

IN ACCORDANCE with the principles of skete-life, the number of monks in St. Nilus' Skete was always small. During his lifetime this number attained no more than one hieromonk, one deacon, and twelve monks. Doubtless the intention of St. Nilus in blessing his disciple St. Innocent to found a cœnobitic monastery was to keep his own skete small.

In addition to St. Innocent, another Saint known to have been under the influence of St. Nilus was St. Cassian of Uglich,** a Greek prince from Constantinople to whom St. Nilus wrote two letters which have been preserved. He founded his own monastery on the Volga. The influence of St. Nilus seems also to be present in the Rule of St. Cornelius of Komel.***

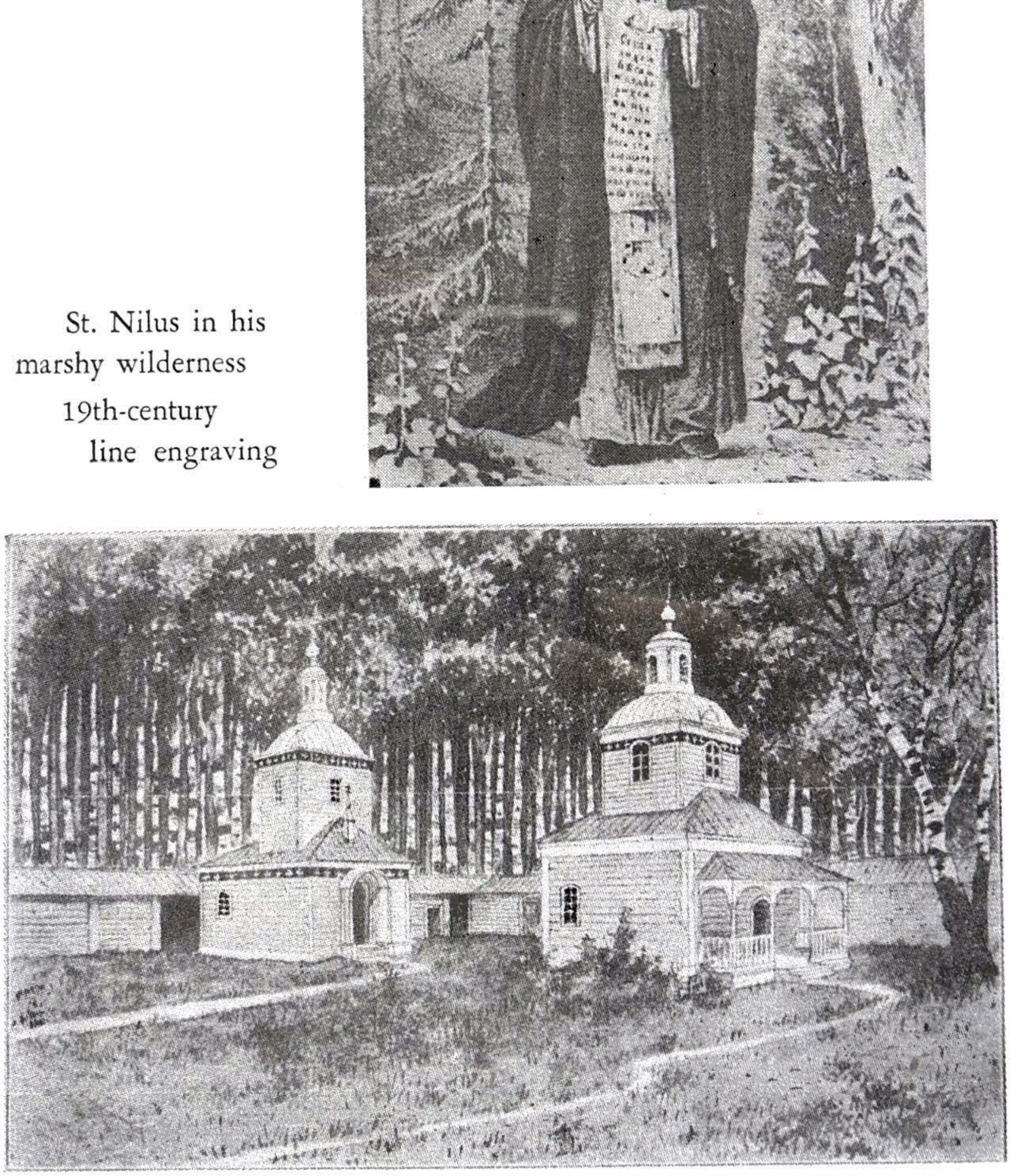
The direct influence of St. Nilus on Russian monasticism, however, is difficult to trace, and it is actually of secondary importance beside the one undeniable fact that the contemplative monastic tradition of the North is based entirely on the Eastern Fathers of Greece, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. The Skete Rule of St. Nilus (besides which only a few of his letters and his brief "Testament" survive) is wholly in the tradition of these Fathers and consists largely of citations from them. St. Nilus himself says: "Like a dog picking up scraps from the table, I have gathered the words uttered by those blessed Fathers..."

The subject of the Skete Rule is primarily, as we have seen, not the outward order of the monastery, but the inward activity of the monk. The Holy Fathers call this activity the "mental work," which means the practice of the Orthodox spiritual life, centering on the Prayer of Jesus. After an introduction emphasizing that all outward, bodily labors are precisely for the purpose of purifying the "inner vessel," St. Nilus gives an outline of the inward spiritual battle, which occurs in the mind, in the realm of thoughts. The victory or defeat which the Orthodox Christian sustains here is then translated into the virtues or vices which can be observed outwardly.

Five degrees can be distinguished in the battle as one is led away from God-pleasing purity of mind: (1) A simple thought or suggestion (in Slavonic, *prilog*) which comes to the mind from outside; not depending upon us, such fleeting thoughts are not sinful in themselves, and even the spiritually perfect are not entirely free of them. (2) "Conjunction" (*sochetanie*) or conversation with the thought, granting it permission to come within, receiving and holding it in the mind. This may be done with or without passion, and so may be sinful or sinless, depending on the outcome. (3) "Joining" (*slozhenie*) or accepting the thought, being defeated by it; this is judged more or less severely depending on one's state of advancement in spiritual

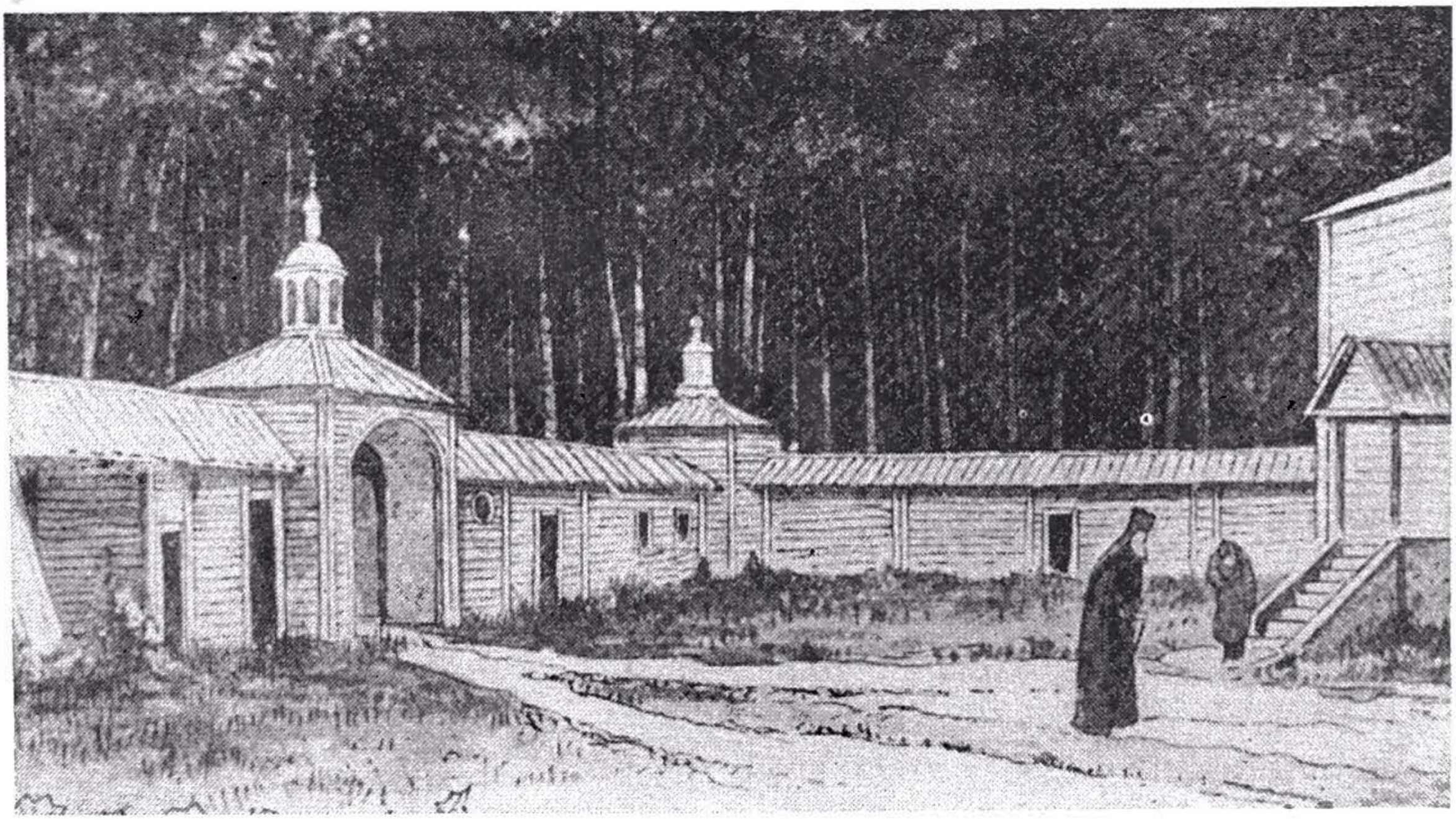
** †1504, Oct. 2.
*** †1537, May 19.

St. Nilus in his
marshy wilderness
19th-century
line engraving



The Golgotha and Gethsemene Chapels in St. Nilus' Dormition Skete

The Skete of St. John the Forerunner, showing the old church of the Forerunner, originally built over St. Nilus' grave, and the house built over the well of St. Nilus



The entrance tower and the walls of the Dormition Skete,seen from inside

life and on the basic orientation of one's heart: one may be defeated in thought yet still be determined not to sin in act; or one may accept the thought to such an extent that one is prepared to act according to its suggestion, in which case a penance (*epitimia*) should be given by one's spiritual father. (4) "Captivity" (*plenenie*) is an involuntary attraction of one's heart to the thought, from which state one may be freed and return to oneself with God's help; or, more seriously, the thought constantly settles in one's mind and the mind, carried away from its good orientation into evil thoughts, can no longer return to a peaceful state. (5) "Passion" (*strast'*) is an inclination and activity that have nested themselves in the soul for a long time because of habit and become as it were the soul's nature. A man comes to this state at first voluntarily, but ends by being completely enslaved by it. "Passion" must be subject to penance in this life, or it will bring tortures in the future life.

Further, St. Nilus in his Skete Rule describes how to conduct the fight against evil thoughts, indicating also some of the experiences that may come to one on the path to spiritual perfection, and gives certain general rules of life for one engaged in this struggle. Then he names the eight principal passions from which, the Holy Fathers teach, the many others proceed, and tells how to fight the temptations that come with each of them. These passions are: gluttony, fornication, cupidity, anger, sorrow, despondency, vainglory, and pride.

The Rule concludes with separate sections on the thought of death and the Last Judgment; on tears; on renunciation and detachment; and on discretion and moderation in the practice of the spiritual life.*

THE SKETE of St. Nilus always remained small and humble, as its founder had wished it to be. However, as with all monasteries the state of its spiritual life was not always high, and in the first half of the 19th century in particular the Skete was in a condition of great decay, both spiritually and physically. It was at this time that God raised up a great ascetic who made St. Nilus' Skete once more renowned for its flourishing spiritual life. Even though

* The Skete Rule of St. Nilus has been translated into English and printed in G. P. Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality,* Sheed & Ward, New York, 1948, pp. 90-132. However, the reader can place no trust in the introductions and comments of the "liberal" scholar Fedotov, who has no understanding whatever of Orthodox spirituality and its tradition and thus looks pointlessly for "originality" in the Saint's "literary work," disdains the "merely traditional accounts" contained in the Lives of Saints of this period (it was precisely from this rich source that I. M. Kontzevitch wrote the best work on the Russian spiritual tradition, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia*), and finds it significant that St. Nilus was "the favorite saint of the Russian liberal intelligentsia"!

Schema-hieromonk Nilus

he did not restore everything according to the letter of St. Nilus' testament, and in one respect acted contrary to his express desire — nonetheless, in his life and spirit, and even in the physical surroundings of his last years of skete-life, after St. Nilus' "chastisement" of him, one may catch a glimpse of the spirit of the great founder of skete-life in Russia and breathe a little of the fragrance of the isolated wooden sketes of the North. Indeed, it is not by accident that this new ascetic of St. Nilus' Skete should likewise bear the name of *Nilus of Sora.*

Schema-hieromonk Nilus of Sora (1801-1870) was born of devout Orthodox parents. His father was in correspondence with Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, the new zealot of the Holy Fathers and of the monastic "mental work" by no means second even to St. Nilus, and the disciples of Elder Paisius often visited his house. Living in various monasteries, Father Nicon (his name in monasticism) occupied responsible positions in them; but all the time his heart was weighed down with his worldly cares and he sought a more isolated place for ascetic labors. By God's Providence he was directed to the Skete of St. Nilus, which was then dependent on St. Cyril's White Lake Monastery, and the abbot of the latter was only too happy to place him in charge of restoring the Skete.

The sight that greeted Father Nicon at St. Nilus' Skete was truly a sad one: the two old churches on the mound which St. Nilus had made, as well as the other skete buildings, were in bad condition, some of them falling to pieces; only St. Nilus' mill on the Sora was more or less whole. But what was far worse, the eight monks who lived in the Skete were far from models of sober monastic life, and they were not disposed to being corrected by their new superior. Indeed, just outside the Skete Father Nicon ran into a group of laughing and singing women who had been working in the monastery for the brethren! Nonetheless, the remoteness and desolateness of the Skete, its humble churches, and the grave of St. Nilus (who was buried under the wooden church of the Forerunner) attracted the soul of Father Nicon; and soon St. Nilus himself appeared to him during sleep, conversing with him and commanding him not to refuse to become superior, and promising to help him.

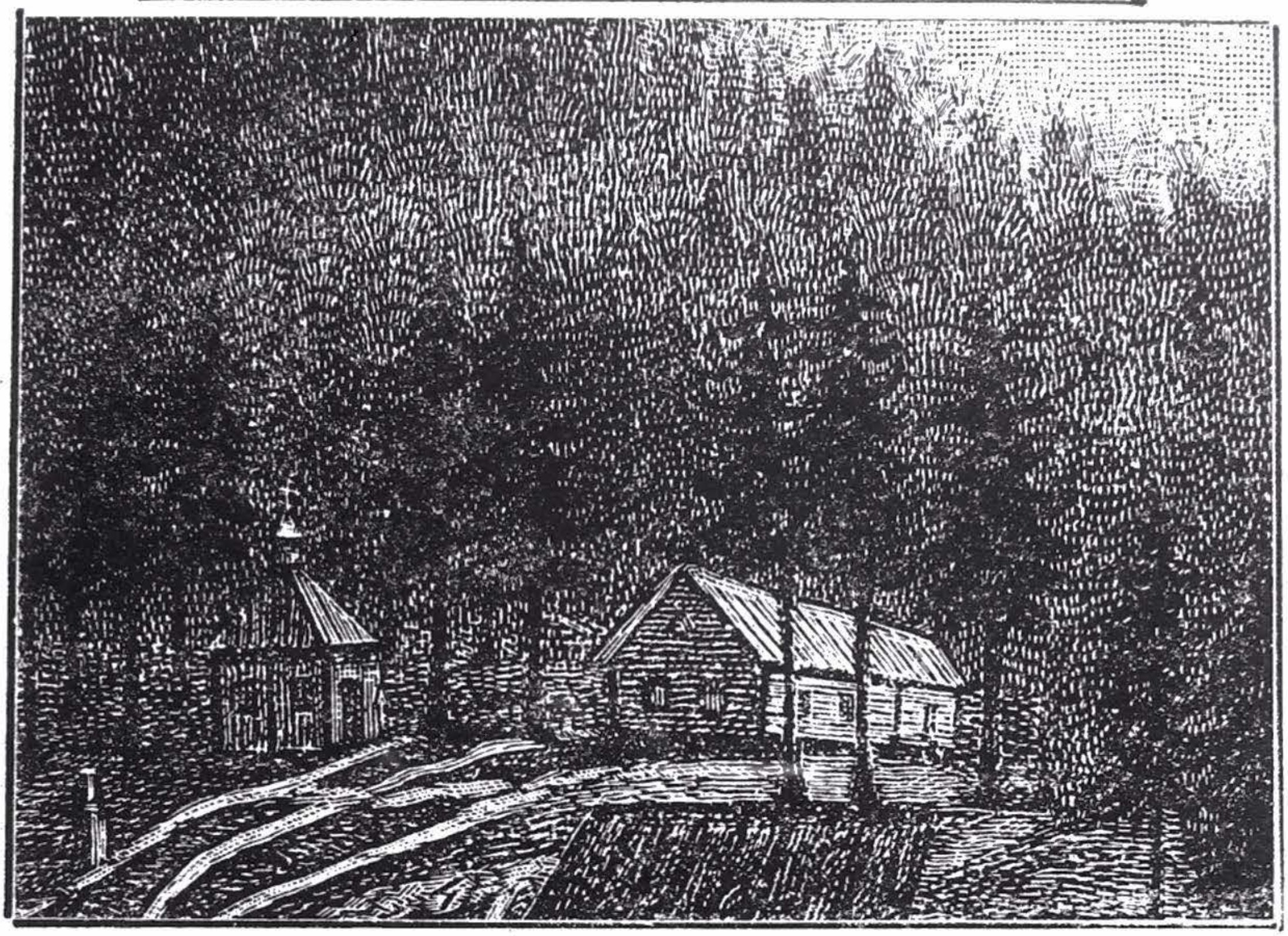
Becoming superior in 1837, Father Nicon introduced a strict monastic rule and in three years had restored the buildings and built a fence around the Skete enclosure. Some 20 monks joined him. Next to the well and pond which St. Nilus himself had dug, he built a chapel and a small cell for his own solitary labors.

Rasophore-monk John

Soon many pilgrims began to visit the Skete, and here Father Nicon succumbed to the temptation which the abbot of St. Cyril's monastery proposed: to build a large stone church in place of the two small wooden ones. The biographer of Father Nicon does not say so, but it is obvious from the events that followed that St. Nilus, who once had threatened John the Terrible for the very idea of building a stone church in his Skete, chastised those who presumed to act against his express desire. Before the stone church could be finished, the abbot of St. Cyril's monastery was removed from his post and Father Nicon was banished in disgrace and under interdiction to a distant monastery for having kept in his cell without reporting it some human bones (very clean and fragrant, with drops of myrrh, evidently those of a holy monk of the Skete) which had been found when the wooden churches had been dismantled and the whole area of the mound with the old sepulchre had been levelled. Further, during the course of the construction of the stone church, the arches holding up the central dome collapsed, and with them a 16-year-old boy fell from the roof and was buried by bricks; it was by an evident miracle of St. Nilus that he was found under the rubble completely unharmed.*

In his banishment Father Nicon fell almost into despair, being encouraged, however, by a voice from an Icon of the Mother of God which told him that he would return to St. Nilus' Skete and receive the great schema. And in fact, in three years he was allowed to return to his beloved Skete, but now not to be superior, but rather to retire to his own little skete near St. Nilus' well, to which place Father Nicon had previously removed the dismantled wooden church of the Forerunner which had stood over St. Nilus' grave at least since the 17th century. This church gave the name to this second skete of St. Nilus: the Skete of the Forerunner. (*Continued on page* 217)

* This incident is recorded by A. Muraviev, *The Russian Thebaid of the North,* St. Petersburg, 1855, pp. 353-354.



Spruce Island in Saint Herman's time

Baroness Elizabeth
von Wrangell

Admiral Ferdinand P.
von Wrangell

A Treasury of Saint Herman's Spirituality

SAINT HERMAN'S EARTHLY CASTLE

XIII

WE HAVE RETURNED from a 200-mile trip to the islands and to the coasts of our colonies. One of the most pleasant memories which we brought back from this trip was that of Father Herman, who has been living among the Indians now for forty years and has devoted himself completely to his civilizing mission. The vigor and liveliness of his mind, and his profound and true piety made him an amiable and instructive companion, and I regretted having to part with him.

The worthy clergyman was sent to the then still heathen Aleuts on the island of Kodiak in 1795. This territory, which is quite rightly called Land of Hunger, suffers from a severe climate. The mountains are bare, and the coasts and the inland are covered with virgin forests and swamps.

In 1795 a Mission of several clergymen settled in Kodiak. One of them became a victim of his own zeal. When he was on his way to visit some poor villagers, he was swallowed up in the swamp. Another one was sent back because of poor conduct. Father Herman kept faithfully to his post.

It was difficult to get to Herman. We had to force our way through the forest, where the storm had broken the dry branches of the trees and scattered them around and had uprooted many trees. In the middle of the island we found a half-collapsed hut. There he stood, a little old man of 76, bent over, with dazzling white beard and hair, and bright lively eyes which, however, were almost completely deprived of sight. He had a clear voice full of liveliness, which was the reflection of the nimbleness of a refined mind. His

movements were energetic, as of a man thirty years old. He had a sense of humor, and it was difficult to understand how he could have retained so much elasticity and interest in everything after having lived forty years in solitude.

I expressed my wish to visit his hut. Herman remarked, laughing, that the sight of his castle would be too imposing. The hut stands in a clearing and is just about to fall to pieces. The inside corresponds to the outside. One enters through a kind of anteroom which is blocked up by a pile of wood and various other things. The main room is just as dark as the first room. There is a wooden bench along the walls all around the room, in the Russian manner. An oven of huge dimensions is a little sunk in; a leather cushion on its side serves as a bed. The blankets and the mattress are not there; the window-sill of the only window serves as the dining table. A table and a wooden bowl complete the household furniture, together with some cracked earthenware. In one corner one sees an old library, consisting of religious books which are approved by the Greek Orthodox Church. The books are torn from much usage.

Outside the hut there is a small field, which the Father cultivates and which furnishes potatoes, turnips, and radishes. It is two miles to the beach, and Herman has to carry all the seaweed from there himself, which he uses as fertilizer. The dry branches lying around supply him with firewood, and this excellent man assured us that no prince in his castle could be a more absolute lord than he is, and that he has everything in abundance. We saw some bread lying on the breadboard, and its origin was not quite clear to us. Herman told us that he dries potato slices on the oven and then grinds them to flour in a little hand-mill. His bread had a quite good taste.

At our request the Father agreed to take us to his schoolchildren. We started out, and when I saw that his weak eyes could hardly distinguish the obstacles in the way, I offered him my arm, and he seemed very glad that my 25 years were supporting his 76 years. Soon we came to the edge of a bay where there stood various huts, which were surrounded by meadows and small gardens.

"The men are away to get meat and furs," Herman said to us, "and the women are drying fish; but here in the house I see my small flock. Maria, come with the children."

Maria is a woman of mature age, who after a frivolous life was converted by old Herman, and who now looks after the children entrusted to her with earnestness and kindness. The parents, who are absent all summer, are happy to know that their children are well taken care of, that they learn to

write according to their age, and that they are instructed in Christian teaching. We attended a religious lesson given by Father Herman. It was a model of heartfelt and simple warmth. Maria is doing also some farming in the area of the settlement, with great success. The smallest corners are utilized for planting vegetables and flowers. This year she managed to put aside 100 hundredweight of potatoes, and this, together with the abundance of fish, will help to face the menace of hunger this spring.

Father Herman's eyesight is too weak to enable him to read the church services... He knows them by heart.

His admonitions and prayers at the farthest boundary of the inhabited earth will remain with us in blessed memory.

(From a letter of Elizabeth von Wrangell, nee Baroness Rossillon, to her parents in Reval from Sitka, about 1835)

XIV

ZEALOT OF ORTHODOXY

I ASKED the Father (Herman) why he was seeking his salvation in this melancholy solitude, and why he had voluntarily separated himself from his fellow citizens, whom he was supposed to be converting.

Herman: "You think that I am supposed to possess the truth, and my seeming idleness displeases you. But do you know what the truth is and where you can find it?"

I saw that it was necessary to emphasize our Lutheran Faith, and I replied to him: "We are convinced that we possess it because we respect the Faith of our brothers in Jesus Christ."

Herman: "No, no! Those who have left the true Orthodox Church are not on the right path."

This discussion displeased me, and I gave the bold monk to understand that we could make better use of our time.

"You see," Herman concluded the conversation, abandoning this subject, "my diocese is not very large, only a few hundred people. Fetishism disappeared from this region thirty years ago. I have seen many who have changed to a better life. I am happy now to wed the children I once baptized. Oh, if we only could have a chapel and a bell!"

This wish I could fulfill. A few months later a ship brought the necessary boards and beams, and with the strong help of the Aleuts the chapel was built.

(*From the Diary of Ferdinand von Wrangell,* 1835)*

XV

GIFT OF CLAIRVOYANCE

IN 1834, while Governor F. P. Wrangell was in Kodiak, Father Herman came to visit him at his invitation (just as the Governor's predecessors had likewise invited him, for the Elder was eloquent and untiring in edifying conversations). A bed would be made for Father Herman in the study; and when they would come in the morning to make the bed, they would find it completely untouched and found the Elder always awake!

At that time, Father Herman one day asked Mr. Wrangell to write something (later I heard that it was apparently a letter to a Metropolitan, but I don't know which one), with the request not to polish up his language at all but to write just as he dictated. When it was finished he asked that it be read, and when he found it faithful to his dictation the Elder got up from his chair, thanked the Governor, and said: For your faithful labor, Ferdinand Petrovich: I congratulate you on attaining the rank of Admiral. Mr. Wrangell jumped up from his place with visible fright, and bowing he said: What do you mean, Father? To which Father Herman replied that he would receive it. And when Mr. Wrangell left for St. Petersburg, this prediction was fulfilled. Perhaps this good man is still alive and has not forgotten what happened.

(*Notes of Constantine Larionov, May* 21, 1867, *Sitka, in*: The Valaam Missionaries in America, *St. Petersburg,* 1900, *p.* 174)

* Entries XIII and XIV were kindly made available and translated from the original German by Mr. Arno Koch. The unpublished German manuscripts are in the possession of Governor Wrangell's grandson, Wilhelm von Wrangell. For earlier entries in this "Treasury," see *The Orthodox Word,* 1969, no. 6; 1970, nos. 1, 4-5.

Saint Nilus of Sora

(*Continued from page* 211)

In 1852 Father Nicon received the schema with the name of Nilus, in honor of the great founder of the Skete, and now he began a life which in many respects resembled that of his patron saint. Especially after 1861, when he founded a second, less accessible skete (the Dormition or Gethsemene Skete, dedicated to the Mother of God) farther on in the forest, he led the strict life of a hermitic skete-dweller. Women were never allowed inside the skete enclosure, and even when he should happen to meet women pilgrims outside the enclosure, Father Nilus would never converse with them, but only give his blessing in silence. His contact with the world was limited to writing replies to spiritual questions on pieces of paper which would be delivered by his cell-attendant. His All-night Vigils followed Athonite custom and lasted, as in the days of St. Nilus, the whole night, twelve hours and more. He constantly read the Holy Fathers and made their thought his own; his spiritual instructions to his brethren were filled with references to them. His rule differed from that of St. Nilus in that he served Liturgy every day, for which rarely did more than two or three monks join him. The church and two chapels which he built, as well as the other buildings and the fences enclosing his sketes, were all of wood. In the ancient church of the Forerunner he collected all the old icons and church utensils of St. Nilus' Skete, and he himself painted many new icons in strict Byzantine style — for he had learned this art in his youth. In a word, while St. Nilus' Skete itself became an ordinary cœnobitic monastery with a very unremarkable stone church, Father Nilus' small sketes carried on as much as possible the tradition of St. Nilus himself.

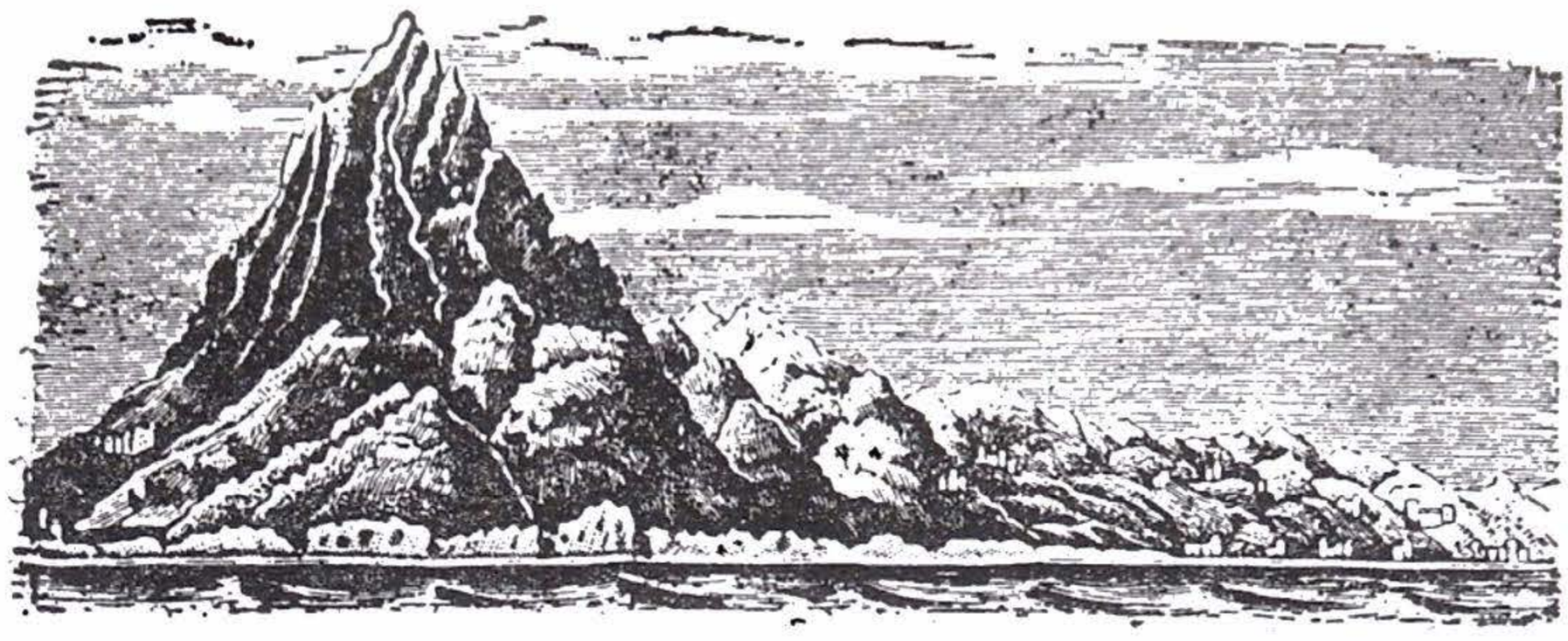
Father Nilus labored greatly for the glorification of St. Nilus, painting several icons of him and writing the first service and akathist to him. He also had the intention of writing a service to St. Seraphim of Sarov many years before his canonization; and, as if to emphasize the spiritual connection between the two great desert-dwellers — St. Nilus of the 15th and St. Seraphim of the 19th century — Father Nilus died on the very date of St. Seraphim's canonization, only 33 years before the event (July 19, 1870). In his skete, as remote and desolate as the old sketes of the northern forests, Father Nilus ended his life of great sanctity, revealing gifts of clairvoyance and healing. He appeared after his death to his spiritual father, telling him: "Do not grieve for me; I have been deemed worthy of God's mercy." The Abbess of a nearby convent likewise appeared in sleep to one of the nuns, telling her to inform the sisters that she was now in the blessed dwelling prepared for Elder Nilus.*

* The full life of Father Nilus (and briefer lives of some of his co-ascetics) is contained in: Bishop Nikodim (the new martyr), *Lives of Russian Ascetics of the* 18*th and* 19*th Centuries,* Moscow, 1908, July volume, pp. 278-379.

A number of other holy ascetics also flourished at this time in St. Nilus' Skete. One of the most remarkable of these ascetics was the *Rasophore-monk John Shaposhnikov* (1802-1863), a cripple who labored in the Skete of the Forerunner and in a solitary cell in the forest. He was chosen of God from his youth, walked on water, vanquished the demons after undergoing ferocious attacks from them, was granted several wondrous visions, and was visited and healed by the Most Holy Mother of God Herself. Once, when he had first come to St. Nilus' Skete and was still sorrowing over being forced to leave the monastery of St. Cyril of New Lake because he was a cripple, he was standing in great sadness in church for the All-night Vigil of a major feast in winter. Suddenly he saw an unknown elder in schema come out of the altar to him and say: "Well, apparently you do not wish to serve me. If so, return to St. Cyril." At these words the elder struck him with his right hand quite strongly on the shoulder. John wished to bow down to him and ask who he was, but he instantly became invisible. Noting that the elder exactly resembled St. Nilus as he is depicted in the icon over his relics, John was filled with great joy, all his grief disappeared, and he firmly resolved to spend the rest of his life in the Saint's Skete. On the place where Father Nilus was soon to build his Dormition Skete, he saw one night a fiery pillar and he heard angels singing, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." After beholding this vision for a long time, he prophesied the future spiritual glory of this place, which indeed came to pass.

After the death of Father Nilus, one of his disciples, *Schema-hieromonk John* (1830-1903), continued to live in his Sketes, at first in the Skete of the Forerunner, and then, for the eight years before his death, in the Dormition Skete, whose spiritual glory thus did not cease right up to our own century. He had a great devotion to St. Nilus, especially from the time when, in his youth, he carried the Saint's icon with him while collecting alms for the Skete. Often he would pray for a long time before the icon to the Saint, asking him to help save him from the many temptations that he encountered on these trips. From this icon there were many healings. Father John became widely known as a great ascetic, and many came to him for spiritual advice. In the last year of his life he went into complete seclusion in his cell in the Dormition Skete. His final wish was to live to see the canonization of St. Seraphim, for whom he had great veneration, and to die on that day, which was also the date of the repose of his elder, Father Nilus. And in fact, on the very day of St. Seraphim's canonization, July 19, 1903, after Father John had risen from his sick-bed to serve a moleben to the newly-canonized Saint, he departed to the Lord. (Life in Bishop Nikodim, *op. cit.*, Nov., pp. 262-276.)

And so the spiritual testament of St. Nilus has given abundant fruits, and the Saint himself did not cease to visit the place of his earthly labors. With the coming of the Communist Yoke upon the Russian land, nothing is known concerning the fate of his Skete, although most of its buildings are not likely to have survived. Yet the Saint's example remains ever alive, and his prayers do not cease for the suffering race of Christians. By his prayers may we also find salvation! Amen.



The Zealots of Mount Athos

LEAVEN OF TRUE ORTHODOXY TODAY

I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?
St. Luke 12:49

WHAT IS THIS FIRE which our Lord came to spread on the earth? It is, in the teaching of the great Orthodox Father of the 19th century, Bishop Theophanes the Recluse, the *zeal* of an Orthodox Christian, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. He writes: "This is that fire which the Lord came to send on the earth and which, falling on the earth of our nature, devours there everything inessential, but everything needful it remelts and purifies. The Apostle had it in mind when he wrote to the Thessalonians: *Quench not the Spirit* (I Thes. 5:19). For although this Spirit is the grace-giving Spirit, still its presence in us is witnessed by the burning of spiritual zeal; and it is quenched when this zeal is quenched. He had precisely it also in mind when he instructed the Romans: *In carefulness not slothful; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord* (Rom. 12:11).

"Carefulness and lack of slothfulness are zeal itself; fervency of spirit is the witness of its presence and activeness; serving the Lord is the direction and spirit of this zeal. Guiding such zeal, the same Apostle commands the Philippians: *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. And the God of peace shall be with you* (Phil. 4:8-9). Behold what it is about which the soul which has come to life is zealous, the soul which is united with God and as a result of such zeal preserves this union. For this the God of peace will remain with him—a good than which there is none higher."*

The saints whom the Church of Christ puts before us as examples in her calendar are, in this understanding, precisely the *zealots of God*. In all ages the Church has chosen for the instruction and inspiration of the

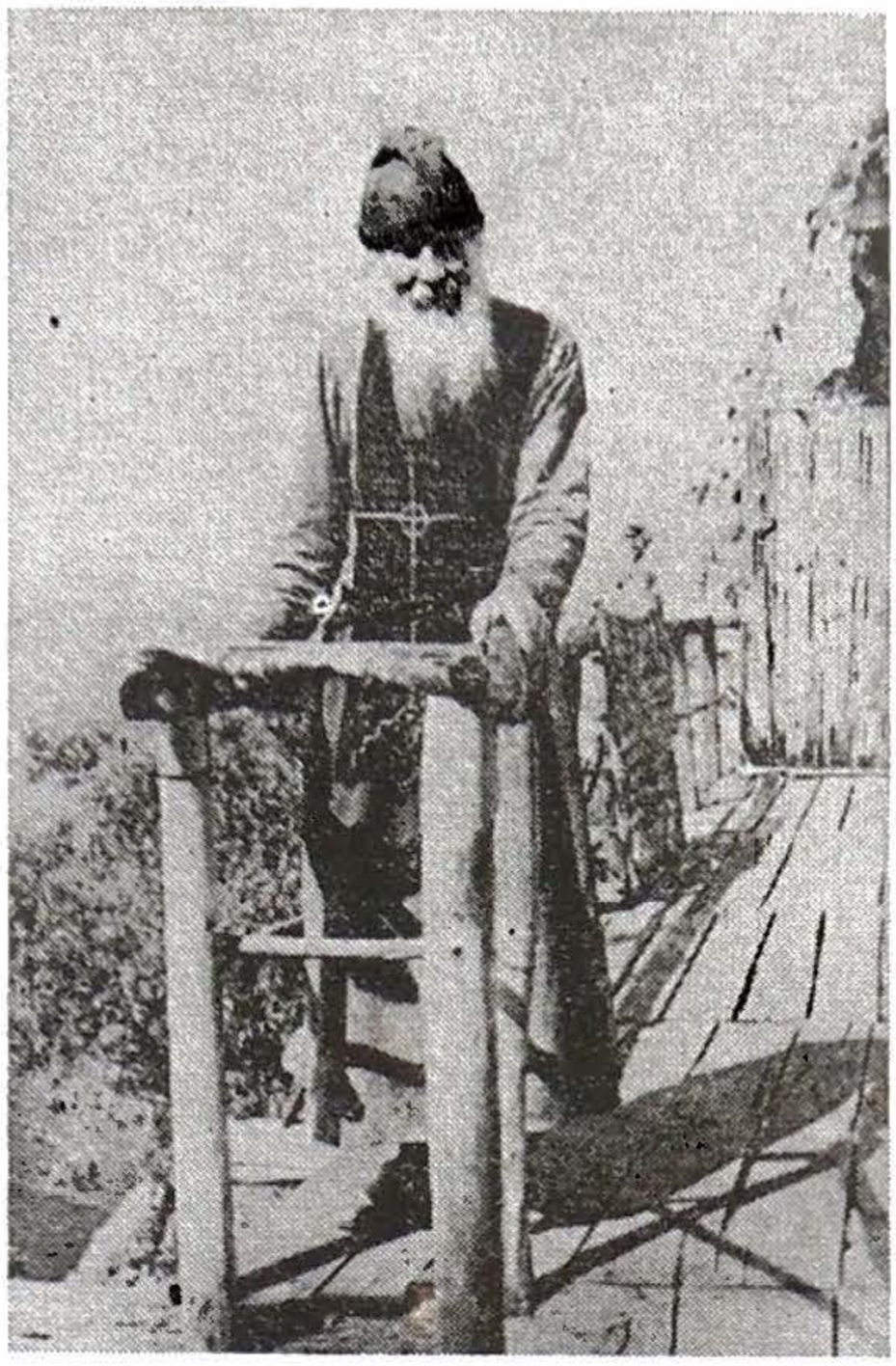
* Bishop Theophanes, *What Is the Spiritual Life?* Moscow, 1914. Reprinted by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1962. Ch. 23, p. 88.

faithful the most fervent and uncompromising of her zealots: her fathers and ascetics, martyrs and confessors, from Simon Zelotes, the bridegroom at Cana of Galilee who was so moved by the miracle of Christ turning water into wine (John 2:1-11) that he left the banquet and his bride and everything of this world in order to follow the Lord; to St. Maximus the Confessor, who when informed that all the Orthodox Patriarchs were now in communion with the apostate Patriarch of Constantinople, would only say, "Even if all the world shall enter into communion with the Patriarch, I alone will not"; to St. Mark of Ephesus, who in his zeal for Holy Orthodoxy stood firm even when the Orthodox bishops at an "ecumenical council" signed the Unia with Rome; to St. Athanasius of Brest, who gave his life in order not to betray Orthodoxy and become a Uniat. But why make a list of individual zealot saints, when one cannot open the Life of *any* saint of Christ's Church without reading of the divine zeal by which he pleased God, expressed in such typical phrases as "the Saint began to labor with yet greater zeal," or "being zealous for the glory of God and the purity of Orthodoxy."

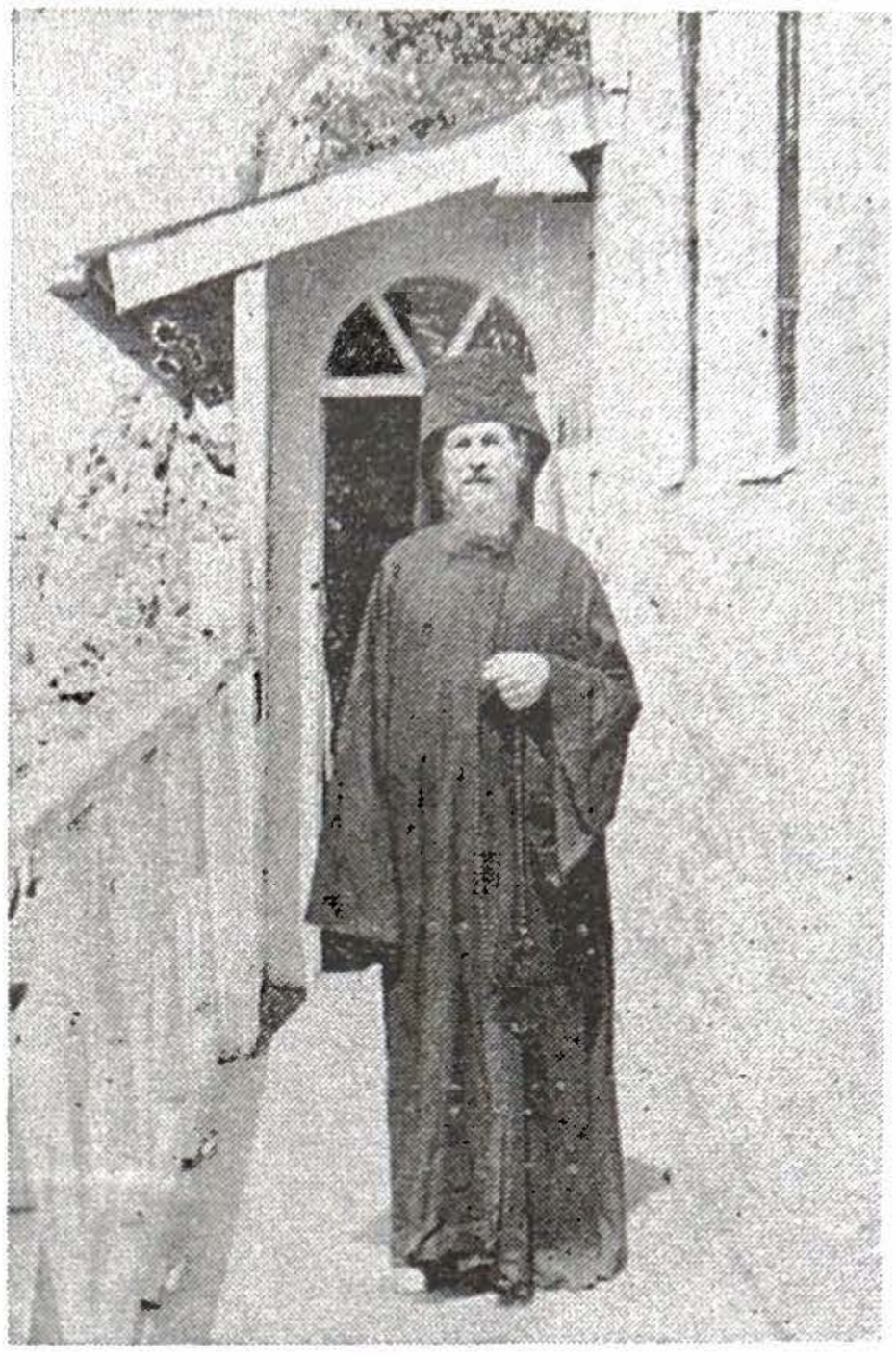
ZEAL is the very center of the life of Christ's Church, and therefore those who look with disdain at our present-day Orthodox zealots are either not genuine Orthodox Christians, or else they have formed mistaken notions of zealousness. Orthodox zeal, needless to say, has nothing to do with soulless phariseeism or the attachment to the letter of the Church's law at the expense of its spirit; nor with the emotional revivalism which some substitute for zeal; nor, certainly, with the combination of phariseeism and emotionalism which prompts some misled converts to think they "know better" than the Holy Fathers and ascetics themselves what Orthodoxy is. Such kinds of "zeal," being only human, fade away, and only the true zeal inspired by the Holy Spirit remains ever fresh and burning. Bishop Theophanes writes: "Do not confuse one zeal with another. Spiritual zeal entirely expends itself in pleasing God and saving the soul; it is full to overflowing with the fear of God and it preserves unceasing heedfulness toward God, in every way being concerned to allow nothing either in thoughts or in feelings or in words or in deeds that is not pleasing to God, as indicated by one's conscience, which it preserves as clean as a mirror; it preserves the heart from any kind of attachments to anything save to God and Divine things, and in hope it is translated to another world, having cut off all earthly hopes" (p. 86).

Such true zeal, as the Holy Fathers teach us, is not at all "fanaticism"; it is rather the *norm* of Orthodox Christian life. Anything less than such zeal is not a path of "moderation," as some pseudo-theologians would tell us; it is rather lukewarmness, coldness of heart, the beginning of apostasy or stepping away from that heartfelt and fervent service of God which is the only kind that the Lord accepts. The presence of this zeal is surely one of the signs of the continued existence of Christ's Church. We know that near the end of this world *the love of many shall wax cold* (Matt. 24:12), and that then the numbers of Christ's chosen flock will be small: *When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:8.) But as Christ is faithful to His promise that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against* His Church (Matt. 16:18), we know that, in the midst of a cold and dying world, Christ's faithful will continue to burn with the fire of that zeal which our Lord came to spread on the earth, and which cannot be extinguished as long as His Church lives!

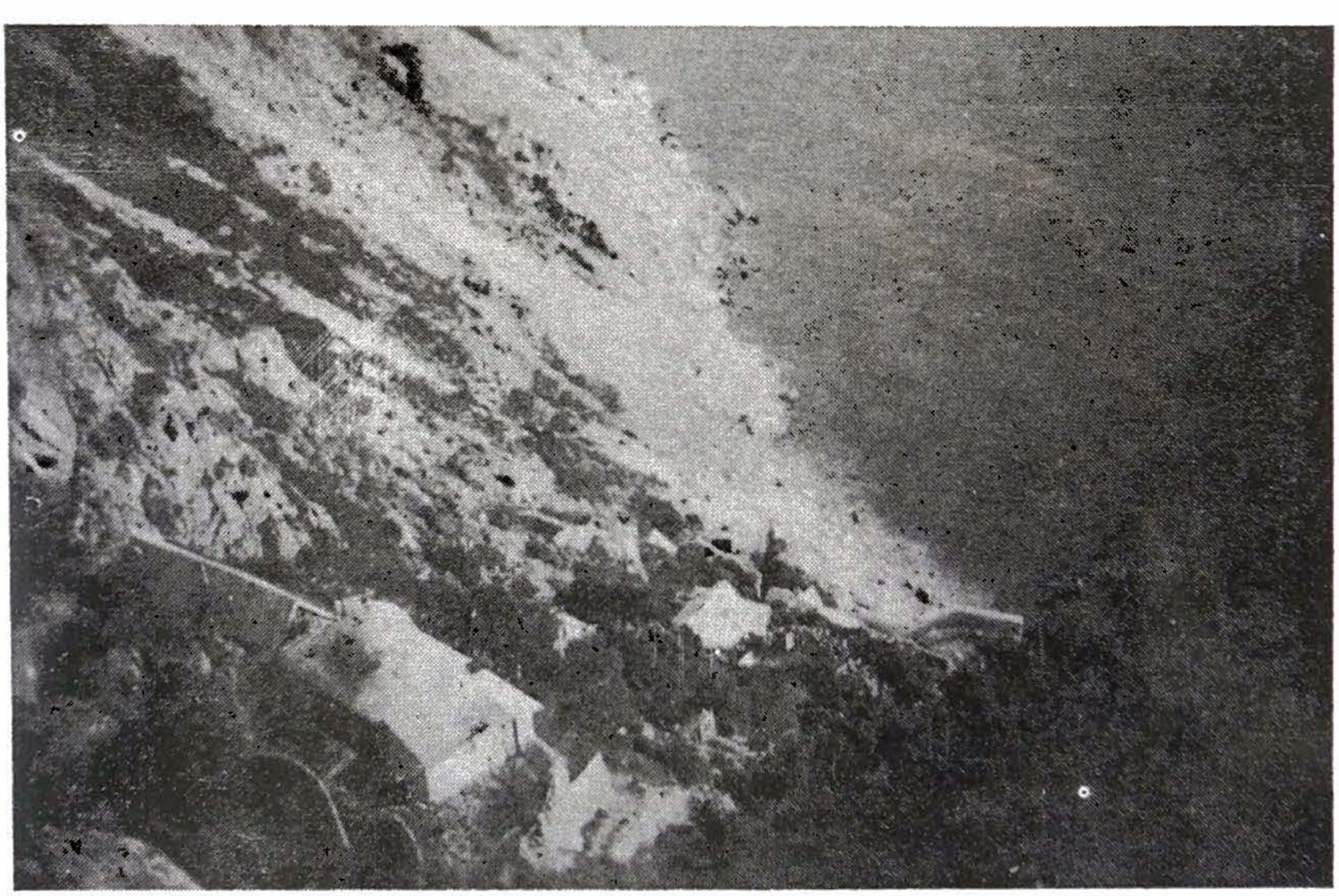
Thus the sad state of the Orthodox world today need not unduly distress us. In viewing the sorry spectacle of almost all the



Schema-hieromonk Theodosius



Schema-monk Nikodim



KAROULIA on Mount Athos:
Holy Trinity Chapel built by Elder Theodosius, seen from above

Abbot Athanasios
of the
Esphigmenou
Monastery
in a feast-day
procession

Some of the Zealot Fathers of the Sketes of Mount Athos:
Sitting, center: Hieromonk Maximos, to his right another hieromonk,
to his left a deacon. Standing, at left: Father Theodoritos.

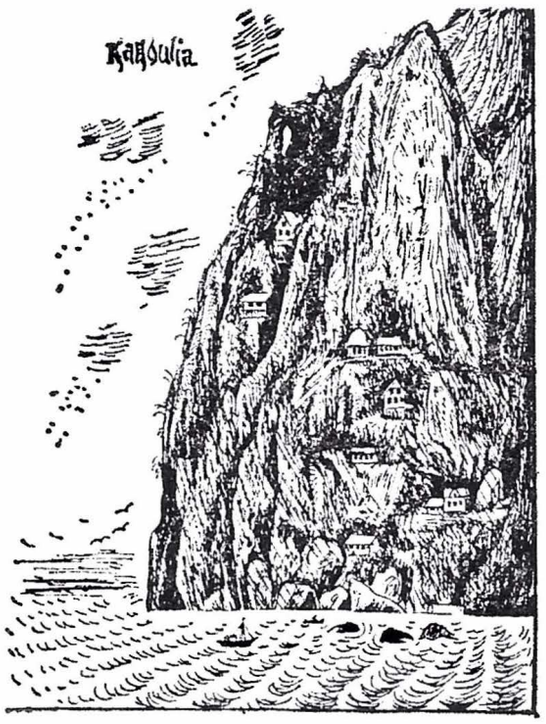
Orthodox Churches and "jurisdictions" one can only conclude that here is the exact opposite of what Christ came to give: almost universal lukewarmness and indifferentness, extinguished lamps that give no more light, a salt that has lost its savor, an Orthodoxy that seems to be solely a matter of habit, faith swallowed up in worldliness, producing senseless compromise and apostasy.

This sight is surely enough to dampen the zeal of any Orthodox Christian — until one stops to realize that all of this is Orthodoxy in name only, that without the divine zeal that characterizes true Orthodox life it is not Orthodoxy at all, but only the extinguished remains of a once-burning fire. And then one learns to look elsewhere to find true Orthodoxy today, which according to the promise of our Saviour will continue to live until the very end of this world; and he who has kept even a spark of true zeal within himself will recognize that this zeal burns still in the world, being kept alive not where numbers and fashion and conformity to the world prevail, but where there are a striving and a burning for God's truth and righteousness. The fire of true Orthodoxy is still alive in many places: in the Catacomb Church of enslaved Russia, in the persecuted True Orthodox Christians of Greece, in the maligned Russian Church Outside of Russia, in the Zealots of Mt. Athos.

THE CENTER of the 20th-century Zealot movement is unquestionably, as it has been many times before (for example, in the 18th century with St. Nicodemus and the Kollyvades movement), the Holy Mount of Athos. It is indeed fitting that the Holy Mountain, sacredly dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God, set apart from the world as an island of Orthodoxy, and made glorious by a multitude of ascetic strugglers and fighters for Orthodoxy, should take the lead in this, perhaps the beginning of the last great battle for Orthodoxy before the Second Coming of Christ. In the world, relationships among different Local Churches and even within a single flock can be very complicated, and often the Church's economy must excuse situations which fall short of the Orthodox standard of zealousness. It is very difficult to remain a zealot in the world, and that is why the faithful of those few remaining Orthodox Churches which strive to be truly Orthodox look to the monasteries, and above all to the Holy Mountain, to derive inspiration for their own fight.

To be sure, the battle for Orthodoxy is intense also on the Holy Mountain, and unfortunately several monasteries are openly anti-Zealot, actually commemorating the apostate Patriarch of Constantinople, while others follow an unsteady and ultimately impossible path of compromise, rightfully having ceased to commemorate the Patriarch, but not yet breaking off communion with other monasteries which do commemorate him. Only one monastery — Esphigmenou — and that quite recently, has taken the pure Zealot stand of breaking off communion with the commemorators, and for the rest the Zealot movement is one of individuals, cells, and sketes on the Holy Mountain — some 300 monks in all, which, though far from a majority, is nonetheless a considerable proportion of the monks remaining on Mt. Athos.

Little is known in the world of these lonely battlers for true Orthodoxy, and their very battle has been little appreciated. Many worldly people see their battle as one over "details" such as the preservation of the Church calendar or the non-commemoration of the Patriarch. Alas, these lukewarm Christians do not understand the Faith of Christ, nor the wiles of the enemy of man's salvation. With apostasy just as with sin, the devil never offers an obvious evil, but only tempts by means of small "details" that build up to form an entire broad path which



leads to destruction. The introduction of the papal calendar in the 1920's was only a test, by which to see how many could be tempted on to the path of renovationism which has become so obvious today; and few are they who have the courage to turn back once they have entered this path: each step on the way proceeds logically and inexorably from the one preceding it, and the only way to save oneself from it is to refuse to take the first step. The commemoration of the Patriarch has now become even less of a "detail" than the revision of the calendar. Even as in the days of St. Maximus the Confessor, it is a dogmatic issue; for he who commemorates an open heretic, who declares that the Orthodox Church is not the Church of Christ but only a "part" of it (see the Enthronement Address of Patriarch Demetrios), thereby joins himself to his heresy and takes him for his leader on a path whose ruinous outcome is now surely more than evident.

Here we shall present the words of three present-day Zealots of Mt. Athos: one from among the desert-dwellers or hermits, one from among the skete-dwellers, and one abbot of a ruling monastery. Let the Orthodox world know from their firm stand that true Orthodoxy is still alive in the world!

1. *The Russian Hermits of Karoulia*

UNKNOWN to the world, Russian Zealots still exist on Mt. Athos, even after the Russian monasteries have been left virtually empty. Their center is *Karoulia,* an area of hermits' cells built on and sometimes dug out of the steepest cliffs of the Holy Mountain. Spiritually they descend from the holy elder, Schema-Hieromonk Theodosius, who reposed in 1937. A direct disciple of Elder Theodosius, Schema-monk Nikodim, continues to live, with two other monks, in the cell of his elder, preserving unaltered his monastic rule and strictness. Being remote from the world, they have seen perhaps more clearly than those living in the world the theological and spiritual foundations of the troubles of the Russian Diaspora, and they remain, as a matter of principle, in communion only with the Russian Church Outside of Russia, refusing even to commemorate at Liturgy anyone from the other Russian "jurisdictions." In a recent letter Father Nikodim explains something of the beginning of the Zealot movement on Mt. Athos in this century:

"Zealots: This name was taken by the Greeks from the Holy Apostle Simon Zelotes. From 1924, as soon as the new calendar appeared in all Greece, a division occurred on Mt. Athos. Four monasteries accepted the new calendar. In a short time there were found in the Holy Lavra of St. Athanasius certain manuscripts — the anathemas against the new calendar of Patriarchs Jeremiah and Cyril. After reading these manuscripts, three monasteries returned to the old calendar, but Vatopedi monastery remained in the new calendar and remains in it to the present time. The other nineteen monasteries, without accepting the new calendar, did not break off communion with the new calendarists and did not separate from the new-calendarist Patriarch,

and many of them commemorate him to the present time.

"Some cell- and desert-dwellers of Mt. Athos became zealous and separated from the Patriarch, ceasing to commemorate him, but did not cease contact with the monasteries which commemorate the Patriarch. A part of the Greek and Moldavian desert-dwellers and our Russian inhabitants of Karoulia ceased contact also with the cell-dwellers who had communion in prayer with the monasteries, and from this zeal the name "Zealots" originated. There are over 300 of such Zealots among the monks of Mt. Athos.

"Two elders became the leaders of the Zealots: Schema-monk Callinicus, a Greek, an advisor of Elder Theodosius; and the spiritual father Ignatius, a Bulgarian, the elder of Father Theodosius; and also my elder, Schema-Hieromonk Theodosius of Karoulia.

"Such a division on Mt. Athos exists right up to the present time (1971)."

2. *The Skete-dwellers of Mt. Athos*

The largest number of the Zealots of the Holy Mountain live in the sketes: St. Anne's Skete, New Skete, Kafsokalyvia Skete, the Skete of Xenophontos, the Skete of St. Panteleimon belonging to Koutloumousiou, and others. While being administratively dependent on one of the twenty ruling monasteries, each group of skete-dwellers is free to take the Zealot stand or not as it wishes. In recent years the Zealots in the sketes have found a spokesman in the young Schema-monk Theodoritos, a resident of St. Anne's Skete, who has published several books in Athens: one on the life of St. Nectarios; *Desert Dialogues on Ecumenism,* which refutes this heresy: and, most recently, a book on frequent Holy Communion. No reader of these well-reasoned works will succumb to the illusion of some Orthodox "modernists" that the Zealot movement is born of ignorance and backwardness! Here is the challenge of the Zealots of the Holy Mountain to the Orthodox Christians of the world.

THE "ZEALOT" MOVEMENT AND THE SERVICE TO ORTHODOX FAITH ON MT. ATHOS

By Theodoritos, Monk of St. Anne's Skete

THE "ZEALOT" movement on Mt. Athos appeared at the time of the forcible and anti-canonical calendar change imposed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople and by the Church of Greece in 1924. And while none of the "worldly" clergy protested effectively or with any result, on the Holy Mountain, on the other hand, tens of hieromonks and a fair number of monks reacted drastically by cutting off all communion with those who had accepted the innovation, and likewise with those who continued to follow the Old Calendar, yet remained in communion with the New Calendarists, such as the Slavic Churches and some Patriarchates.

The question arises: did they have the right to do this? Certainly yes, given that in the past also (9th century) the great and holy Abbot Theodore of Studion likewise broke off communion with all those in communion with Presbyter Joseph, the priest who had blessed the unlawful fourth marriage of Emperor Constantine VI.

Yet in the present case, in the anti-canonical introduction of the new calendar, the gravity of the innovation was much greater, since it concerned the whole body of the Orthodox Church. The calendar innovation, which did not come from or lead to any pastoral need of the body of the faithful, meant a direct retreat before Papism,* while at the same time it served the realization of the Patriarchal "Message" of 1920, according to which the various Chris-

* Alexander Kalomiros, *Against False Union,* Boston, 1967, p. 34.

tian denominations and "Churches" should not be considered "as alien and strange to each other, but as akin and related in Christ *and fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ* (Eph. 3:6)."†

And time has shown that the Zealot fathers as well as the lay faithful who have followed them were by no means wrong. Since then one innovation has followed another, while everyone considered them "details," and not "dogmatic" subjects, which for the innovators are the only ones that call for breach of communion, as followers of "courtesy" have said in contradiction of history and tradition...

But behold! Beginning in 1965 (December 7) the above "dogmatic" subjects also appeared, namely the lifting of anathemas, various cases of joint prayer of Orthodox with different heretics, Papists and Protestants, and even the administration of sacraments to Papists by certain Orthodox hierarchs and priests... And, instead of being moved by all this, Orthodox bishops and other clerics and monks, as well as the "wise" University theologians, continue still to forbear, finding this time new passwords to appease the disturbed conscience of their pious flock, such as "economy for a time" and "collective opposition," thus suppressing all private initiative and any attempt to arouse "God's people" to check the accursed Ecumenism.

Unfortunately, however, even the Holy Mountain has not been able to dismiss the ideology of the "Ecumenist" Orthodox! Even today those who "commemorate" or are in communion with those who "commemorate" consider the Zealot fathers to be "fanatics" and "backward." In spite of their wisdom, they are indifferent to, or rather ignorant of the fact that by being in communion with any Ecumenist, and consequently with the successor of Athenagoras, his equivalent, Demetrios I, they have, as it were, become Uniats!

† Prof. John Karmires, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Monuments of the Orthodox Church*, Athens, 1953, vol. 2, p. 951.

Skete of St. Anne

We write this because since 1968 the commemoration of the Pope was inserted into the Holy Diptychs of the Patriarchate, in conformity with the declaration made at the time by the late Athenagoras.* At the same time, the Roman Pontiff was not only frequently *publicly* commemorated even before the Patriarchal Synod, but most triumphant hymns (*polla eti Despota,* "Many Years to the Master") have been sung in his honor.†

A pattern marking the present situation on the Holy Mountain is the fact that all the Zealot fathers happen to be "dependents" (those who live in huts and sketes, not in monasteries, on which they are administratively dependent), i.e., poor and obscure by the external standards and criteria of this world, but select and honorable in the eyes of God, faithfully following the

* Metropolitan Philaret, "First Sorrowful Epistle," 1969.

† Ar. Panotes, *Peacemakers*, Athens, 1971, pp. 203-4, 207.

lawful voice of their lawful pastors.**

An admirable exception among the monasteries of the Holy Mountain is the holy monastery of Esphigmenou, which has lately (1971) broken all communion with those who commemorate the Patriarch, or are directly or indirectly in communion with him, while maintaining communion *only* with the nearly 250 Zealot fathers. Because of this, it has become an object of grief to those who control and exercise pressure upon the Holy Community.*

In our opinion, the precision in question observed by the Zealots and required by the holy canons is *unique* in the Orthodox Church and is a sound resumption of Byzantine "Studitism." We write "unique," since the Churches with which the Zealots are in communion — the Church of the Russian Diaspora under Metropolitan Philaret and the Greek Church of the Old Calendarists — are obliged to practice a certain amount of economy (which in our opinion is now unwarranted) by reason of the environment and of the conventions which govern them, especially the former. However, it should be duly emphasized that *the time has come to cease all these economies,* to announce the heresy which is now spreading and coming within the hearing of the simpler people, else the union of communion between them is in danger. And we say this not for personal reasons or from excess of zeal, but because of the propaganda of the Ecumenists and the lukewarm Orthodox, who consider any such economy to be agreement with their line and thus a chance for them to announce that nothing separates them, nor is there any difference between them and the above two Churches, since they also are acting by "economy"... Such seductive proclamations, very cunningly composed, have been appearing in Greece since 1969.

As a small leaven full of life, the strictness of the Zealots daily leavens the select Orthodox bread for the faithful who ever hunger after truth, which bread is always destined to be made in the oven of confession with the wood of compliance with and conformity to the holy traditions in the midst of a society waxing cold in love and true faith! (Matt. 24:12.)

Practicing the scriptural *stand fast and hold the traditions* (II Thes. 2:15), as well as the watchword of the holy Abbot who has inspired them: "If any be monks at the present time, let them show it in deed. And the deed of the monk is not to tolerate, even by chance, any innovation of the Gospel,"* — let the zealots trumpet together "let us stand aright," while at the same time, by the prayers of the holy Fathers and Confessors, they preserve their most holy eucharistic altar pure of all heretical communion until the Second Coming of Christ! Let all the faithful imitate them in deed and word!

3. *The Holy Monastery of Esphigmenou*

BEFORE THE EYES of 20th-century humanity the once-glorious Orthodox world is entering the last stages of its dissolution, as the consequences of earlier compromises and false steps finally become most obvious. Even now the burnt-out shells of "Orthodox" church organizations are making their political preparations ("preparing the peo-

** "All those who pretend to confess the sound Orthodox Faith, but are in communion with people of a different opinion, if they are forewarned and still remain steadfast, you must keep not only incommunicatives, but must not even call them brothers" (St. Basil the Great).

* *Iera Koinotis,* i.e., the supreme administrative and judicial body of the Holy Mountain, consisting of 20 representatives of the ruling holy monasteries.

* St. Theodore the Studite, *Answers,* M.P. G. 99, col. 1049D; details in the work of Theodoritos Monk, *Desert Dialogues on Ecumenism,* Athens, 1971, p. 306.

ple") for the coming Unia — no longer merely with the Latin church, but with the whole of apostate and unrepentant Christendom. More than ever, the Zealots of Orthodoxy are a despised and often persecuted minority, and on Mt. Athos in particular the battle has become fierce. But as the great crisis of Orthodoxy approaches, more and more the followers of "moderation" come to see the error and folly of their position and make their choice — and some are choosing the Zealot side. Just recently, in 1971, the monastery of Esphigmenou with its 45 fathers became the first monastery of Mt. Athos to take the full Zealot stand of breaking off communion with the commemorators of the Patriarch, and soon Archimandrite Haralambos and the fathers of Simonopetra monastery expressed their support for this position in view of the pressures which the Holy Community is bringing to bear on the new Zealots. In his reply to the Holy Community of July 21, 1972, the abbot of Esphigmenou, Archimandrite Athanasios, expresses well the Zealot determination today:

"You call our Monastery 'zealot,' desiring to show your aversion by this appellation. Could you find a sweeter name for us? The Lord Himself is 'zealous': *Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God** (Ex. 34:14). As a logical consequence, we His servants should be called zealots and should be proud of this name...

"We are writing to Your Reverence as monks to monks, and for the last time we remind you of these words of the New Testament: *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,* LET HIM BE ANATHEMA (Gal. 1:8). The only goal of all of us is the Heavenly Kingdom, for the sake of which we have left the world and have suffered the afflictions of the monastic life. Why should we shut our eyes in order to hear at the end the ANATHEMA of the Apostle Paul? The way is hard, there are insults, persecutions, etc., but we have engaged ourselves to all this when we put on the great Angelic schema...

"We inform Your Reverence that we cannot give in even on one-thousandth of the above, lest we fall under the ANATHEMA... *For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ* (Gal. 1:10)."

BISHOP THEOPHANES concludes his definition of Orthodox zeal in the following words:

"In defining the proper direction of zeal, the Apostle writes to the Romans: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God* (Rom. 12:1-2). The renewing of the mind is the renewing of our spirit by grace. Having come to life, it removes itself from the deeds of this age and is zealous only to please God, offering its whole self to God as a sacrifice living and holy, and therefore also acceptable to God.

"And so you see what zeal is, what is its power and what its direction! Inasmuch as the significance of this zeal is so great, it is worth the labor of determining whether we have it or not. And so, labor at this!" (*Ibid.*, p. 89.)

May the words of this Holy Father be a command to us last Christians, and may our contemporary Zealots (for whom let us offer fervent prayer!) truly be for us the leaven of a sacrificial bread which the faithful offer to God by their flaming zeal for Him! Amen.

* In Greek (as in Slavonic) "jealous" and "zealous" are one and the same word.

HEALING OF A DANGEROUS GROWTH

III

In the spring of 1969 *a man came to the St. Herman Brotherhood in San Francisco and asked that the following account be registered:***

I, Ivan Nikitich Lutsenko, feel obliged by my conscience to give testimony of how I was healed by the prayers of our beloved Vladika John.

For three or four years I had a growth on the joint of my next to the last finger, about the size of an apricot pit. For a long time I tried not to pay attention to it, although it bothered me a great deal. People sent me to the doctor to have it cut off. I went to the doctor. The doctor, Constantine Efimovich Zaharov, said that it would be dangerous to cut it off, since he might hit a nerve and then I wouldn't be able to bend the finger any more. But I wanted him to cut off the growth for me. People were already talking about it at work.

I have revered Vladika for a long time. About a year after Vladika's death, soon after the Sepulchre was opened and one could go there, I went there one day. I can't say that I went to him especially to ask his help, but just because he was so very dear to me. Coming to the Sepulchre, I kissed his mantle which is on the sarcophagus, placed a candle, kissed the mitre. I stayed there a while. I prayed at Vladika John's and then somehow forgot about it. In two days the finger began to itch. I saw that the growth had begun to soften, and in a week and a half it had entirely disappeared. And I had suffered with it for three or four years.

I absolutely believe that it was Vladika who helped. I had not gone to him in the Sepulchre for a long time, and then I went and see what happened!

1969 *Ivan Lutsenko*

** Translated from *Blessed John Maximovitch,* St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, Calif., 1971, p. 39.

Fathers Ismael and Michael

THE CATACOMB BROTHER-PRIESTS

This account was compiled from material supplied by Mr. and Mrs. A. Makushinsky, who were residents of the Petrograd (Leningrad) area up to the Second World War, and is in their own words. Mr. Makushinsky, now 90 years old, in his childhood was a member of the boys' choir of St. John of Kronstadt.

ISMAEL AND HIS younger brother Michael Rozhdestvensky were the sons of a Novgorod priest and spent their young years in that city. Later Ismael graduated from the Petersburg Theological Academy, married, and became priest of the Transfiguration Church near Petrograd, leading a very serious and conscientious priest's life. After the 1927 "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius, he became an adamant "Josephite,"* strongly opposing the "legalization" of the Church and going with firm step in the path of the Holy Apostles and Confessors, which of course led to his persecution. The good pastor lays down his life for the sheep. We once heard him say: "I am going to Golgotha; who will follow me!?" And he went far, to the far north, to the region of everlasting ice, from where it was hardly possible for anyone who was sent there at that time to return. But in the souls of those who revere and love him he is alive and, of course, in difficult moments one seeks help from him...

With his honest and pure glance, Father Ismael attracted a large number of the faithful. We lived not far from the place where his church was, and rumors of this highly revered, outstanding pastor were widespread around us. We first visited his church in 1926 and after this made a definite resolve to visit his church every Sunday and feast day. Listening attentively to his sermons and seeing his penetrating, careful, conscientious way of celebrating services, we found it more and more pleasant to be there.

Many people came to the Liturgy and the All-night Vigil. At times not everyone could get into the church, and they would stand in the garden and wait without fail until Batiushka would come out and bless them. Likewise, there were quite a few demon-possessed women from near and far. They loved Father Ismael very much, even though his presence sometimes evoked whole dramas in them. They screamed, threatened, spit, and often fell on the floor foaming at the mouth. But Father Ismael had only to read the prayers, pressing the Holy Cross to their lips, in order to stop all this, and

* For the Life and Epistles of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, the first actual head of the Catacomb Church (independent of the Moscow Patriarchate), see *The Orthodox Word,* 1971, no. 1.

FATHER ISMAEL ROZHDESTVENSKY

in a minute they became normal, getting up by themselves and looking around. I had to witness this more than once. The suffering women sometimes trembled even at the sight of his devoted, obedient spiritual children.

We will never forget the remarkable phenomenon which we observed during a moleben which Father Ismael was serving before the Icon of the Mother of God "Assuage My Sorrow." While Father Ismael was reading the Gospel, before our eyes there appeared a small rose-colored cloud surrounding his head like a halo. This was not long before his arrest and martyr's death in 1937.

Not less striking, not only to us but also to many others in church, was a case of the clairvoyance of this remarkable priest. A man who lived 15 miles away never came to our church, even though he had heard of this exceptional priest who drew people to himself. One Sunday he decided to verify the rumors, and he came. At the end of the Liturgy, standing in the crowd of

Father Michael after
his return from prison

Father Michael with his daughter

faithful, he heard Father Ismael say: "Well, thank you, slave of God Peter, that you are praying for me," and he looked in his direction. He was indeed Peter, and this struck him so forcibly that from that day he became a constant visitor to the church and a man close to Father Ismael.

Yet our poor Father Ismael also knew grief, even from his close ones. After he had begun to celebrate secret services in the Catacomb Church, once at 11 p.m. he knocked at our door, asking lodging for the night. At that time he no longer had his own quarters near the church, since everything had been taken away. He went from house to house and stayed wherever people were not afraid to receive him. This time, after walking the dark, unlighted road from his spiritual daughter to our place, he told us by the way that she had unexpectedly sent him away. After spending the night with us he set out on his way; but he did not in the least change his attitude toward his spiritual daughter, knowing that she was forced to do this because the secret police was looking for him to arrest him, and she had a family of her own to protect.

Once a woman who was not well known to Father Ismael came to confession. When she returned home, perhaps desiring to please her daughter who was married to an atheist, she declared that the priest had hit her while blessing her. Father Ismael had the custom of as it were implanting the Sign of the Cross in the forehead and shoulders. A trial followed, and he was condemned to forced labor. When he returned home after three years, he was again arrested and banished for ten years, which proved fatal: he was never heard of again. He was only 45 years old and left behind a wife and a three-year-old son. When they saw him off for the last time, people wanted to run after the train, but the rifle-butts of the Red Army soldiers drove them back. We will always remember his dear, shining gray eyes, as pure as a child's and a little naive; his smile and his blessing from the window...

Professor I. M. Andreev, who attended Father Ismael's catacomb services in the Petrograd region, informed us that Father Ismael was executed by shooting in 1937 during the "Ezhov" purge.

Even more tragic was the fate of Father Ismael's brother Michael, six years younger, who was ordained priest in 1927 under his brother's influence and at first served together with him in his church. When Father Ismael was arrested, he gave over the care of his flock entirely to Father Michael.

Father Michael's deep understanding of Christianity and his faith in the future life, for which temporal earthly life is only a preparation, sometimes simply stunned people. And so the ever-increasing flock was drawn to Father Michael just as they had been to his arrested brother. He celebrated the Divine services, which at first were still in the church, reverently, penetratingly, and attentively. His sermons, which he considered indispensable, were penetrated with the desire to teach people to love God entirely, with a true, self-sacrificing love, preparing a soul for unavoidable trials, and perhaps for death for Him.

The unforgettable meals after the Liturgy were a great joy, despite the poor food and, in addition, the strictly observed fasts! At table there sat poor and miserable people. To everyone Father Michael had the same attitude; everyone he encouraged. After one such pauper had been buried without charge, the widow was treated with special kindness and was asked to eat at the common table for the whole forty days afterwards. This was an apostolic family; everyone was kin and close, each suffering for the others. Having almost no income, since their flock was very poor, both brothers lived with a single thought: to help, rather than to receive.

In those frightful times, when people were jailed and banished without trial or investigation, solely for faith in God, Father Michael went immediately wherever he was summoned, risking his life, supported only by his faith in God's Omnipresence. He went even to complete atheists in the hours before their death, if by inspiration from above he hoped to awaken their frozen souls. And a dying atheist would glance at the face which bent over him in love, would soften, and... repent.

In 1934 Father Michael also was arrested with his wife and sent in banishment to various places; his two children were taken by their grandparents. After three years he was released, and then he could serve only secretly, having no right even to a place to stay. His wife could not endure such a life of suffering, and on being released from prison she did not return to him but found another man for herself. Still, Father Michael waited to see her when she would come to visit the children. He had no home where he could see his wife or children, and of course he could not meet them at the catacomb services; and so he would meet his wife at various places in the country, and would see the children often at our place. Once she wished to take the children for a visit to her home in Alma Ata. Father Michael asked us to come with him to see them off at the train station. The tickets had already been bought and we sat there waiting for the train, when suddenly the little girl declared that she did not want to go but would remain with her father. The boy, however, went, and when he returned he was already quite different.

After the Sergian "Declaration" Father Michael, of course, became a "Josephite" like his brother, and he allowed us no contact whatever with the Sergianist church. Once he became extremely angry with me for merely turning to look into a Sergianist church as I passed by on the street.

After the Second World War broke out, life became ever more frightful. Here our father increased his prayer and began to prepare everyone to accept a yet more difficult cross. All of us were already prepared for death. Somewhere in a little village, in a hut located far from the main road, the services would begin at 5 in the morning. When and where the services were to be held was communicated by word of mouth, and people would gather, but tried to come separately, at different times, so as not to attract anyone's attention. Afterwards, also, people would leave separately, one at a time.

There were few people at a time for services. Each person was well known to Father Michael, all "our own" people. No new person was accepted into the Catacomb Church until he, his life and outlook had been investigated. If you told an outsider, you might unwillingly become a betrayer.

In place of an altar table there was a simple table; on it were a Gospel, a Cross, and the Holy Chalice. On the walls were icons. Those who were going to sing would gather by the entrance. There were many icon-lamps, and they illuminated the room. Beeswax candles were obtained, apparently from whoever made them. Everything was quiet, orderly, reverent. In the reading and singing not a single letter was allowed to be added or taken away; the services were absolutely complete.

By the beginning of Proskomedia everyone would have gathered for the Liturgy. One can never forget it! Such prayer one cannot experience again in one's whole life! Father Michael with his arms outstretched, and tears streaming down his cheeks... Everyone would weep together, both for themselves and for him, who had, besides everything else, such great trials in his own family. He served slowly, penetratingly... When the dogs would bark outside our hearts froze; but it was for this that we were called, trying to strengthen ourselves.

One's spiritual state at such catacomb services is difficult to express in human language. It is not at all like any service in our free Russian Church Abroad, even though it is the same Orthodoxy. First of all, there is total fearlessness, peace of soul, a heavenly, unearthly joy, the desire not to leave, not to cease praying. One wished only to be with the faithful; let them take us away, let them deprive us of life!

The Paschal service was entirely of heaven. Father Michael was in white linen vestments. His face was unforgettable; it entirely glowed from within, with a heavenly, angelic smile.

Father Michael remained always calm. In moments that could be dangerous, when he, not having a roof of his own and for the sake of his flock not wishing to be arrested, would spend the night with us, suddenly all our fear vanished and we were ready to go with him wherever he might be sent. He was both friend, and brother, and father, and mother. If he had to cele-

ORTHODOX BIBLIOGRAPHY

FATHER HERMAN, ALASKA'S SAINT, by F. A. Golder. Reprinted by Eastern Orthodox Books, P.O. Box 302, Willits, Calif., 95490. 68 pp. $1.50.

THE FIRST brief book on St. Herman in English was written by F. A. Golder in 1914, as a result of his visit to Valaam Monastery. A slightly revised version of this book was printed by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood in 1968, together with a collection of St. Herman's miracles before his canonization in 1970. The present book is a reprint (in slightly smaller format) of the Brotherhood edition, which has been out of print since the canonization. It may be ordered from Eastern Orthodox Books, or from the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 96076.

---

brate a service at our place, he would come in lay clothes with a suitcase in his hand which contained his vestments, and, under cover of the noise made by the kerosene stoves in the common kitchen, he would peacefully and quietly celebrate the service. And God preserved him!

The words which Father Michael spoke to us the last time we saw him were remarkable. The Second World War was raging. The approaching enemy was already bombarding Leningrad, when at night Father Michael secretly visited us on his way to give Holy Communion to his spiritual daughter in the city. All our pleas not to go because of the danger, or to come with us into occupied territory, were in vain, and nothing could stop him. He sat by our table, called us close to him, and said: "Listen carefully. Now we are all about to part. Many of us will not remain alive, will be killed. But remember: no matter where you may be, at the hour of your death I will come to you, will confess you and give you Holy Communion and will myself lead you to the Heavenly Kingdom to the Altar of God, bearing witness for you; for my brother, Father Ismael, entrusted you to me to take care of you as spiritual children, and I must give answer for you."

These were his last words to us. He got up, blessed us, and went away into the night that was charged with guns, fire, and death.

...And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved (Mark 13:13).

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Title of publication *The Orthodox Word*
2. Date of filing October 1, 1972
3. Frequency of issue *Bimonthly*
4. Location of known office of publication *Beegum Gorge Road, Platina, California 96076*
5. Location of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers *Same as above*
6. Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor
   Publisher *The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, Calif.*
   Editors *Father Herman and Father Seraphim, both of Platina, Calif.*
   Managing Editor *Father Seraphim; Platina, Calif.*
7. Owner *The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, Calif. 96076*
   (Father Herman and Father Seraphim, Platina, Calif. 96076)
8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders *None*
9. 10. For optional completion *Not applicable*
11. Extent and nature of circulation

	Avg. no. ea. issue last 12 mos	Actual no last issue
A. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run)	2040	2115
B. Paid circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	138	138
2. Mail subscriptions	1348	1448
C. Total paid circulation	1486	1586
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means		
1. Samples, complimentary, and other free	82	71
2. Distributed to news agents, but not sold	—	
E. Total distribution (Sum of C and D)	1568	1657
F. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	472	458
G. Total (Sum of E and F)	2040	2115

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signature) *Father Seraphim*